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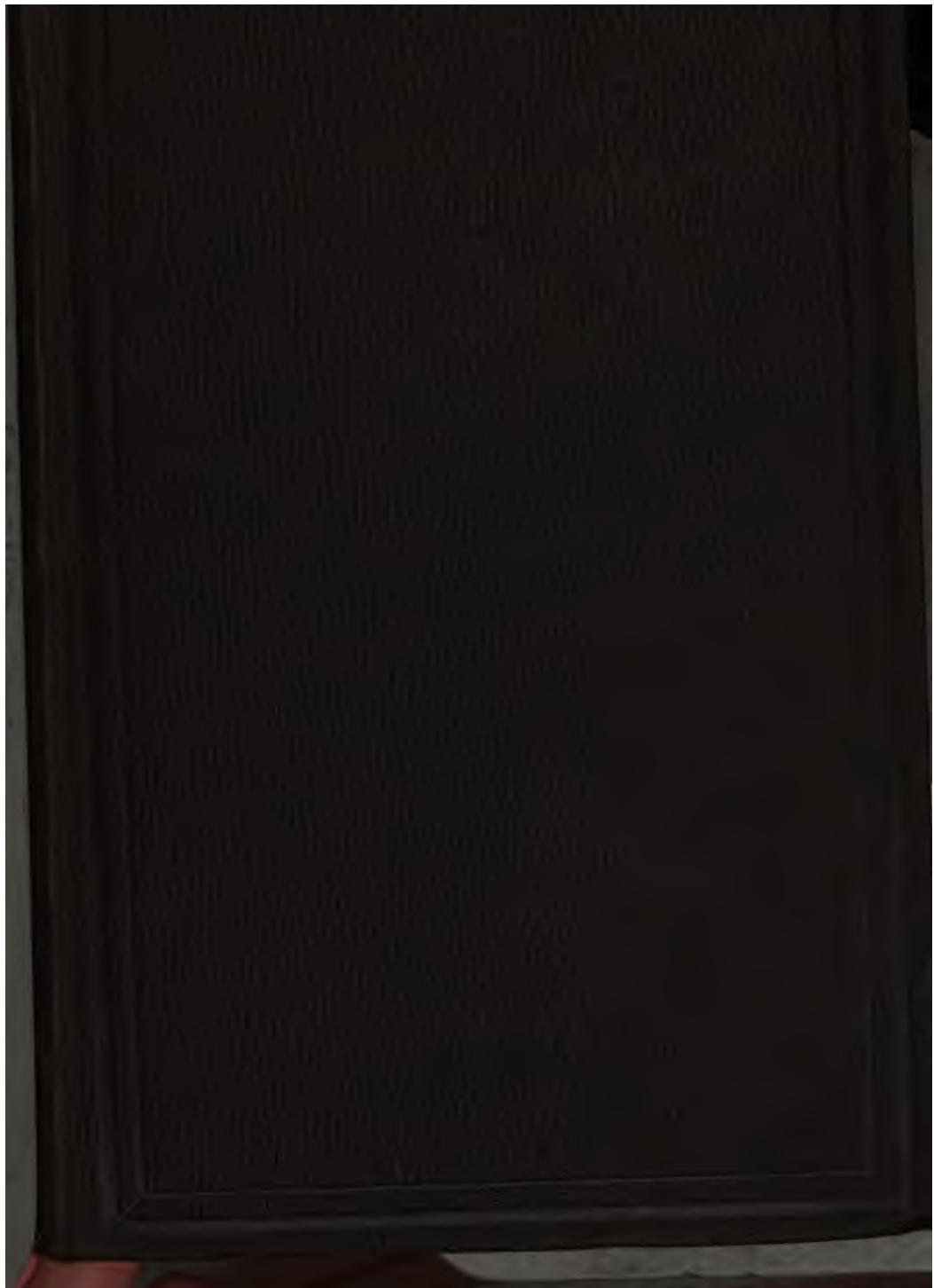
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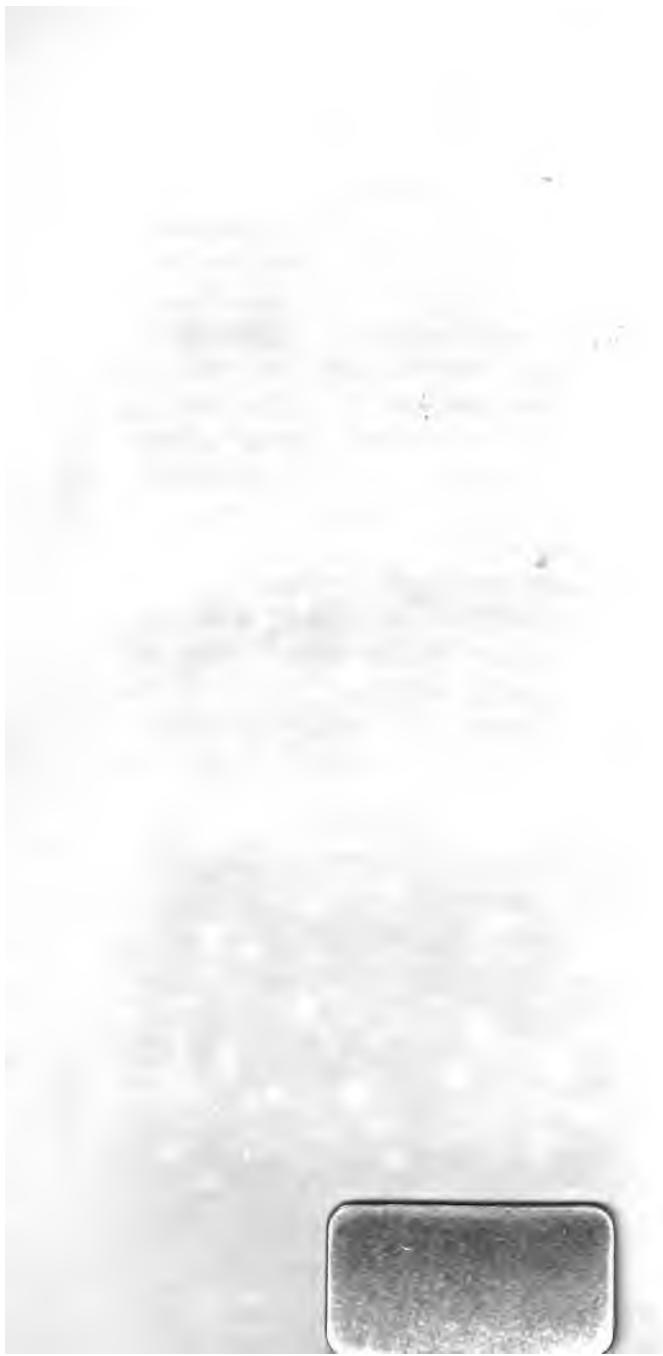
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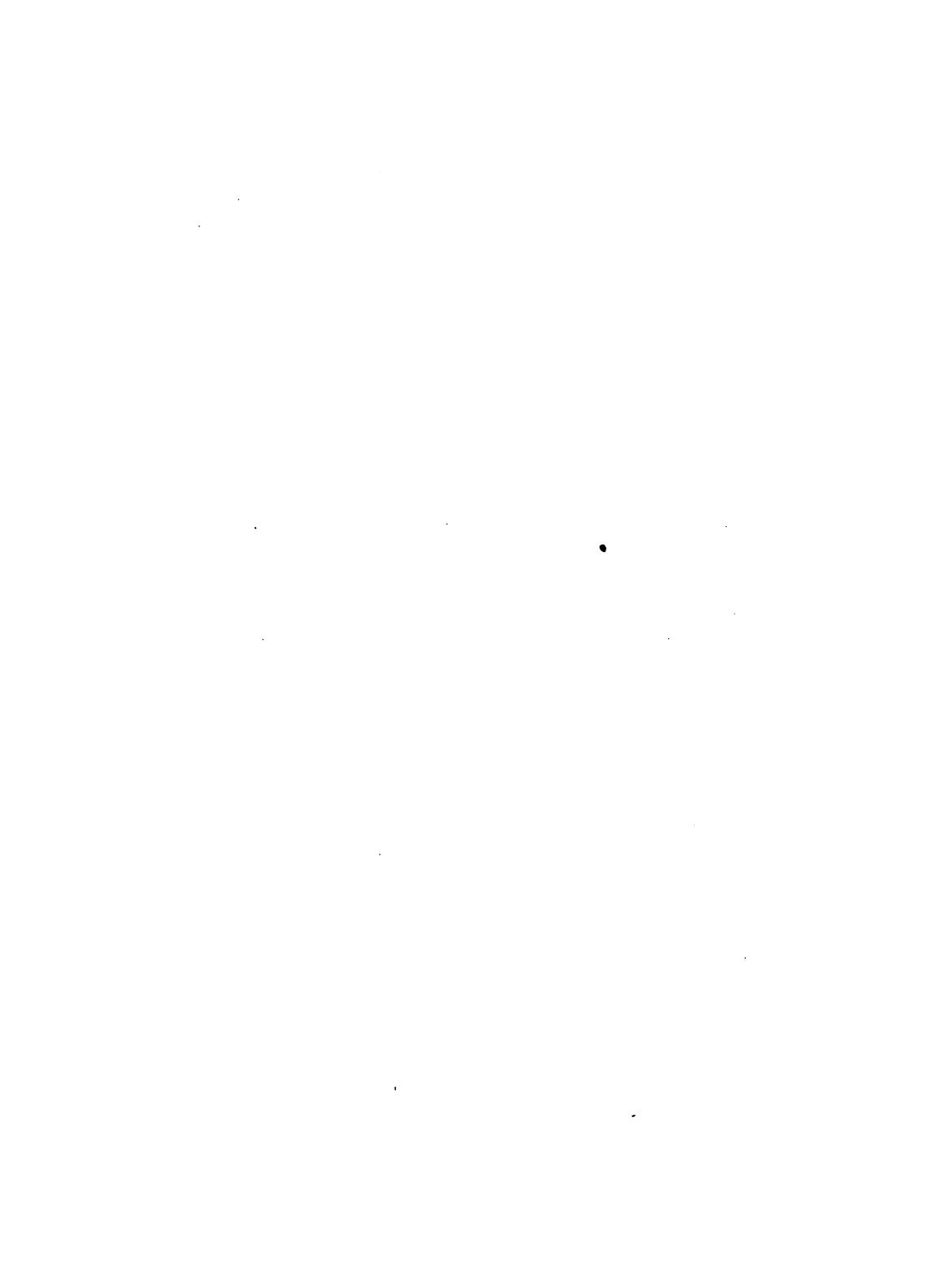
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AND OTHER SERMONS.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

AND OTHER SERMONS.



BY

CHARLES PARSONS REICHEL, B.D.

PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY,
CHAPLAIN TO HIS EXCELLENCE THE LORD LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND
AND LATE DONNELLAN LECTURER IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Sermons contained in this Volume were written, with but one exception, for the Parish Churches of St Mary, Dublin, and St Anne, Belfast; in the former of which parishes I was for some years curate, and in the latter assistant preacher. They are now published, chiefly in consequence of several members of those congregations wishing to be enabled to read what they had heard. That they may be of some use, especially in the department of Scripture interpretation from the pulpit, must be my first wish and prayer: my second is, that they may remind some of those once committed to my spiritual charge of their former pastor and teacher.

I must apologize for the long delay which has taken place in the publication of the Volume. It has been due, partly to ill-health, and partly to other and engrossing occupation.

C. P. R.

BELFAST,
April 28th, 1855.

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SERMON I.

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

ST MATTH. vi. 9.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

I PURPOSE this morning briefly to consider the meaning, expressed and implied, of the commencing portion of the Lord's Prayer: and may He who has taught us thus to pray, enable me so to explain and enforce his words, that in using them hereafter, you may more than ever "pray not only with the Spirit, but with the understanding also¹!"

The first thing that strikes the reflective mind in the Lord's Prayer is the fact, that, although it is evidently addressed to God, the name of God does not once occur in it. Now this fact is of extreme significance. In the consideration of the Deity, whether as he is in himself, or as he is in his general relation to the Universe, there is, in effect, something chilling and repellent. As he is in himself—in his own essence, how does the single thought of his *unoriginated being*, without

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

beginning as without end, seem to have overwhelmed one of the greatest minds that ever was created ! “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God¹!”—This one fact, that there was no time when God was not, that millions upon millions of future ages in infinite succession cannot be said to add to the duration of his dateless existence;—this one fact is quite enough to prostrate the strongest intellect, and to make us feel as though between us and the Deity there was indeed “a great gulf fixed,” a gulf for ever impassable. And if, on the other hand, we turn from the consideration of God as he is in himself, if, flying from the overpowering idea of his timeless—changeless—self-originated—self-existent—self-sufficing Being, we take refuge in considering him as the great Creator of all we see and feel and know;—“when we consider the heavens, the work of his hands, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained²,” how are we lost in astonishment at the immensity of the scene that we behold ! And if we then reflect that the scene, immense as it is, which is disclosed to the naked eye, is but a mere fraction of that which opens on the gaze of the astronomer armed with those instruments which modern science hath devised; that where the unassisted gaze

¹ Ps. xc. 2. This Psalm even recent German commentators, e. g. Ewald, think not improbably attributed to Moses, “the man of God.”

² Ps. viii. 3.

beholds a mere sheet of indistinguishable light, the telescope reveals thousands and tens of thousands and millions of stars—each star a sun—withdrawn to such utterly inconceivable distances from us as to appear crowded, though in reality separated by the most enormous vacuities of space between ; and if we then grasp the astounding thought that even all this is probably but a mere infinitesimal portion of the universe, for that as space is by its very nature infinite, so there is every reason to believe that the creation which occupies space is likewise infinite, so that were we transported to the extremest verge of the most distant star which the most powerful telescope has ever yet discovered—to a distance from this earth of which numbers give not the faintest idea—we should in all probability there again behold beyond us still a scene equally vast, equally illimitable with that which here is vaulted over us :—if we *thus* “consider the heavens the work of His hands,” how can we help exclaiming, under the most crushing sense of our own utter insignificance, “Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ?”

And these feelings, as they are natural, so they may at times be most useful, to give us as it were a measure of God's greatness, and to make us sensible of the ineffable absurdity of man's pride. What ! we proud ! when this earth and all that it contains is but a mere speck, a mere grain of dust, in the universe ! we proud ! when nothing less than omniscience is required in our

Creator barely not to overlook us ! But pride is not the distinguishing characteristic of those whom the Saviour teaches how to pray : and therefore his greatness is not the distinguishing attribute on which he would fix our contemplations in addressing God. From the introduction to the sermon on the Mount, in which this prayer first occurs, we learn that the whole of that discourse was primarily and properly addressed to his disciples, though doubtless it was also listened to by the mixed multitudes whom the fame of the Saviour's teaching and miracles had gathered round him. And this observation furnishes a clue to the whole character of that discourse : exhibiting it, not as a proclamation of the Gospel-kingdom to those who had never before heard of it, but as an explanation of its principles and laws designed for the benefit of those who had already vowed allegiance to it. Accordingly, the very words with which our Lord introduces his prayer, more especially when taken in connexion with the previous passage, prove him to be prescribing this form particularly to *his* *disciples*. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye," not like the hypocrites (ver. 5), amongst God's covenant people, who know God so little as to imagine that his eye is not keen enough to penetrate the true motives of their ostentatious piety : not like the heathen (ver. 7), who with a more excusable ignorance fancy they shall be heard for their much speaking : such persons cannot address God acceptably, since they either know Him not at all, or shrink not from blaspheming Him. But

ye, whose singleness of eye hath discerned in the obscure and humble Nazarene God's messenger, and whose singleness of purpose hath induced you to leave your worldly all to follow me, ye, whose sincerity of searching after truth hath evinced itself in the unreservedness of your submission to it when once found, after this manner pray ye, when ye would approach that great Being whose awful majesty delights in condescending to the meek and lowly: address him not by any of the titles of his infinite greatness; weary him not by a vain enumeration of those attributes which transcend all mortal thought to conceive, all mortal utterance to express: but call him by that name which at once expresses the deepest reverence, and the deepest tenderness, "*Our Father.*"

And, O my brethren! what ineffable comfort is there not in the thought that the awful, the incomprehensible Being whose we are, and in whose hand are all our ways, is not merely our Creator, but our Father! that we are not merely allowed, but expressly directed not only to consider but to call him so; nay, that we are taught by the Redeemer to call him only so; to sink as it were his divinity in his paternity; to forget that he is the Almighty, and remember only that he is the All-merciful; or, if not to forget "his eternal power and Godhead," yet to remember it only as lending efficacy to all those ideas of love which the name of "Father" comprehends: only as investing with omnipotence all the watchful care, all the anxious forethought, all the spontaneously welling up and inextinguishable affection denoted by the parental

name ! What was the first thought that occurred to the Prodigal in his utmost misery ? It was the recollection of his Father's house. What was the first thought that animated his fainting spirit, and invigorated him for the toilsome journey back to that home he had once been so eager to abandon ? It was the recollection of his Father's love : " I will arise and go to my Father ¹ ." Though I have sinned against heaven and before him, and am not worthy to be called his son, yet I know his inexhaustible affection ; I know he will not spurn the returning penitent from his door. And greater than even his expectations was the reality of his Father's love. For when he was yet a great way off, his Father knew him, in spite of all the change that rags and famine and the weary journey must have made in his appearance, and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him ! And when we recollect that this exquisite picture of eagerly accepted penitence was drawn for the express purpose of encouraging us in every possible extremity to consider the Holy One whom our sins have outraged as still the Father, waiting with outstretched arms to embrace us if we will but return—Oh ! cold indeed must be our hearts if they do not glow with gratitude to that Saviour who has thus condescended to illustrate the prayer which he prescribes, and to shew how much he means when he teaches us, when we pray to say, " Our Father ! "

But these considerations by no means exhaust the meaning of the title by which we are taught to address

¹ Luke xv. 18.

our God. We might, for any thing that has been hitherto advanced, consider it a mere title, prescribed indeed for the purpose of intimating God's love, and of encouraging our hearts to rise to him with corresponding feelings of affection, but yet denoting not a real, but only an ideal paternity: friendship, but not actual relationship. This view would, however, fall far short of the whole blessed truth involved in the address "Our Father." Indeed, the single circumstance that He who taught his disciples thus to pray is "the truth itself," as he emphatically tells us¹, should of itself lead us to conclude, that in addressing God as our Father, we are using no mere complimentary title of encouragement. Accordingly, St John in the first chapter of his Gospel, at the twelfth verse, expressly declares that "as many as received the Incarnate Word, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on his Name;" and then proceeds in the thirteenth verse to describe as follows the nature of this Sonship: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:" i. e. by a spiritual, as contradistinguished from a carnal, but by no means from a real, generation. And lest we should suppose this language to be merely figurative, the same evangelist has taken care in his third chapter to record the memorable conversation with Nicodemus, wherein our Lord declares, "Except a man be born again," or, "be born from above," "of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter

¹ John xiv. 6.

² ἀνωθερ.

into the kingdom of God :" and in order to prevent all possibility of mistaking his meaning, and supposing him to speak only metaphorically, adds, (v. 6), "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" thus plainly ascribing the same reality to the spiritual birth whereby his disciples become the sons of God, as to the natural birth whereby they are the descendants of Adam. And agreeably to this declaration of the Saviour, St Peter¹ does not hesitate to assert that the "exceeding great and precious promises" which have been given unto us, extend to the communicating an actual "*participation of the divine nature.*" We perceive then that when our Lord directs his disciples to address God as their Father, he inculcates no term of mere affection, no style of mere grateful effusion : an actual relationship exists between us and the Almighty by virtue of the mysterious operations of his Spirit, whereby he is not merely our Creator and Preserver, as he is the Creator and Preserver of all things, but our Father in a real and most proper sense. A new and divine principle is implanted in those that are born again by the agency of the Spirit acting through the appointed means ; a principle of life and immortality, imperishable because divine. Brethren, I would fain raise your minds to the full realization of this stupendous fact : a fact which, though it be at the very root of our most holy faith, is yet too generally explained away, if not absolutely denied. Thus how often do we not hear that

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4.

change which, in the language of our Lord and his apostles, is called “a new creation¹,” “a passing from death unto life²;” how often, I say, do we not hear this change spoken of as though it were but a change of disposition and principles, similar in kind, and not at all superior in degree, to that which often renders one who has been wasteful in his youth a miser in old age. But these semi-infidel notions, unhappily, alas ! entertained by many who would shrink with horror from the imputation of infidelity, must give way before a more serious and critical examination of God's word; the whole tenor of its language contravenes them. Let us not forget that we are expressly told that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God³:” that the being i. e. which we receive by natural descent cannot partake of life and immortality: that if therefore “Christ hath brought life and immortality to light⁴,” it cannot be merely by *telling* us that we are immortal, but by *rendering* us so. And this indeed we are expressly taught by Him in the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of St John: the whole purport of which is to inform us what are the means of supporting that divine life, the first communication of which He describes in his conversation with Nicodemus. For as in that conversation He tells the Jewish ruler that, “except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” as being de-

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15.

² John v. 24.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 50.

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 10.

stitute of that spiritual nature which alone can live for ever ; and then takes care to provide against being supposed to use merely figurative language in speaking of this new spiritual birth by declaring that “ What is born of the spirit is spirit,” just as really and truly as “ what is born of the flesh is flesh ;” even so in the sixth chapter of St John, he tells the people whom he has prepared by an appropriate miracle to listen to his words with due submission, that, “ except they eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, they have no life in them” (v. 53) : that “ his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed” (v. 55) : and that “ as the living Father hath sent Him, and He lives by the Father, even so he that eateth Him, even he shall live by Him” (v. 57) : thus distinctly affirming that the support of the spiritual life of his true followers depends upon the Son of God as really and truly as the Son of God himself depends upon the Father in the mysterious relations of the Godhead : whilst the preceding words in which he declares that this support of their life is given by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man, point to his human nature, purified and exalted by being taken into the divine, as the basis of our spiritual life and its perpetual supply. And hence the importance of the fact, that Jesus Christ is not merely the Son of God, but also the Son of Man ; “ the second Adam,” the representative of the whole family of the redeemed, and the very fountain of their Being. For we must recollect that

in that perfect state which is God's perfect kingdom, we are not intended to be "unclothed," but "clothed upon¹;" we are not to be disembodied spirits, but spirits arrayed in spiritual bodies. And thus all who truly believe in Christ, and who, having been born again of water and of the Spirit, do maintain that spiritual life by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man, all such are, not figuratively and metaphorically, but really and truly, his brethren; born of the same Spirit, by which he was incarnate in the virgin's womb, and partaking of the same undying humanity with which he is invested at the right hand of the Majesty on high: and hence it is declared in the Epistle to the Hebrews², that "both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one³: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren:" to call them so, observe, not only in consequence of his partaking with them in the human nature derived from the substance of his mother, but also in consequence of their partaking with him in the divine nature derived from the substance of his Father: brethren therefore indeed, in all the fulness of the term. These passages shew how much is imported by the address with which Christ teaches his disciples to approach their God: proving that when he bids us say, "Our Father which art in heaven," he inculcates no merely figurative language, which might flatter our feelings with the semblance of a relationship in which is no reality; but expresses that very relationship which does actually subsist between God

¹ 2 Cor. v. 2—4.

² Heb. ii. 11.

³ ἕστι σὺν οὐρανοῖς.

and every human being in whom dwells Christ “the hope of glory.” For by being truly and literally the brethren of Christ, we are truly and literally the SONS OF GOD.

Oh let these considerations at once cheer and solemnize our minds when we pray to our Creator in the words prescribed by our Redeemer; let the magnitude of the privilege we claim, as often as we repeat the well-known form, arouse us on the one hand to a sense of the fearful mockery of using that form, if we are not indeed God's children by a living union with his dear Son: whilst on the other hand, if we are conscious of but one spark of faith and love, let this privilege encourage us, in spite of every infirmity, of every neglect, of every former back-sliding, to draw near with boldness to what we are assured is a Throne of Grace, because He that sitteth thereon is in the highest and most proper sense “Our Father.”

Having thus attempted to elucidate the opening address, let us now proceed to the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, “Hallowed be thy Name.”

In order to understand this fully, it is essential that you should be aware of the meaning of the term Name, in almost every passage of Holy Writ, wherein it is used with reference to God or Christ. With us a name is simply a word or set of words, the original meaning of which, generally forgotten, has nothing to do with its use; and by which we denote an individual for the purpose of distinguishing him from others. But in the language of the Hebrew Scriptures, names are supposed not

merely to denote, but to describe: they are not mere arbitrary signs of person, but descriptions of character. Hence it is that the inspired narrative lays so much stress on Adam's giving names to all the creatures which God brought to him to see what he would call them, and on the names he then gave being adopted and thereby ratified: because his naming them at first sight was an evidence of the perfection of his powers; a proof of the intuitive sagacity with which at a glance he discovered their most striking characteristics, and of the command of language with which he expressed those characteristics in appropriate terms. And thus the names of most eminent men throughout the Old Testament, as you are aware, do in effect succinctly describe some prominent feature of their character and circumstances. To take the patriarchs for instance: the name of Abraham was given him, we are told, by God himself, to signify the multitude of his posterity¹; the name of Isaac, which denotes laughter, was given for the purpose of alluding to and perpetuating the remembrance of that laugh of incredulity on Sarah's part, which God by fulfilling his marvellous promise, afterwards turned into a laugh of joy²; the name of Jacob means a supplanter, thus graphically representing the unfairness with which, on several occasions, he gained advantages over others³. Nor is this usage confined to those early times: descending to a far later age, we find in the name of David, which means

¹ Gen. xvii. 5.

² Gen. xviii. 12, and xxi. 6.

³ Gen. xxvii. 36.

"the beloved," an admirable characteristic of the prominent feature of the life of the man whom Jonathan loved, with a love exceeding that of women, in spite of all his father could say to incense him against his rival¹; whom his own tribe clung to with obstinate fidelity throughout the most terrible reverses², and who, above all, was the man after God's own heart, in spite of numerous and deadly sins, because his piety was throughout genuine, and his repentance thorough and sincere; whilst again, the name Solomon, which means, "the peaceful," conveys in one word that trait of his character and life which renders him peculiarly emblematic of Him who is emphatically styled "the Prince of Peace." These examples, which might easily be multiplied indefinitely, will suffice to explain the peculiar importance attached to names in Holy Writ; and prepare us to expect that when we hear of the name of God, we are not to consider it a mere sign by which to denote him, but as a description of his nature, or a disclosure of his relation to ourselves. And though the actual names which the Almighty bears in Holy Writ are thus descriptive of his nature, the name Jehovah denoting the self-existent eternal being, whose very essence is life, whilst the name Elohim means the object of highest reverence; yet we should unduly narrow the application of the word "name" with reference to God, if we supposed it to be confined to any one or all of these particular descriptive signs. "The name of God" is, in fact, in Scriptural usage, a compendious term denot-

¹ 1 Sam. xx. 20.

² 2 Sam. xx. 2.

ing all we know of God by revelation; in other words, "the name of God" means "God in so far as he is revealed to us." This definition explains at once a multitude of texts. Thus when we hear of the patriarchs at each stage of their wanderings "calling on the name of the Lord," we are thereby to understand that they invoked God, not as the abstract Deity, not as the first great though unknown cause of all things, (as the light of nature might exhibit him;) but as *their* God, who had been pleased to reveal himself to them, to enter into certain relations with them, and to discover to them his Holy Will. And hence the stress laid by the prophet Joel, as quoted by St Peter (Acts ii. 21), on men's calling on the name of the Lord, and the assurance that as many as did so should be saved in that great and terrible day; inasmuch as by doing so, they would testify their faith, not only in the God of natural, but in the God of revealed religion; and would declare their reliance on the promises which in that Revelation he had given them. Hence too the importance attributed by the same Apostle to the name of Jesus when he declared to the angry Sanhedrim (Acts iv. 12), "that in no other name is there salvation: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;" the name of Jesus here, as you perceive, plainly denoting not the mere word Jesus, but that revelation of God which is included in the person and in the work of Jesus. Hence also, when St Paul declares (Phil. ii. 9), that God

"hath exalted Jesus, and given him that name," (for so it ought undoubtedly to be translated¹.) "that name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," we gather assuredly that he means nothing less than that God hath revealed his Son, the Man Christ Jesus, as invested with all the perfections of divinity, equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and equally entitled to every sentiment and every mark of worship; "so that," as he proceeds, "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," Lord Jehova, "to the glory of God the Father."

These instances, besides being in themselves important, may enable us more fully to conceive the meaning of the petition "Hallowed be Thy name." They shew that far more than mere external deference to the Name of God is intended to be petitioned for; far more than any mere avoidance of profanity or blasphemy or perjury; outward decency or inward respect is but at the thresh-hold of this petition. To "hallow God's name," implies nothing less than to reverence God as he has revealed himself to us, and to act on every occasion of life accordingly. And as, to go no farther than this very prayer, He hath been pleased to reveal himself to us by His blessed Son, as "Our Father which is in heaven," Our Father not merely in name but in nature, not merely in affection but in relation,—in order duly to hallow Him in this His revealed parental character, we must love and

¹ See note at end of Sermon.

reverence and obey and trust Him as dutious children would love and reverence and obey and trust an earthly parent all whose acts they knew were dictated by affection and intended for their benefit: but in far higher degree than any earthly parent can be loved and reverenced, inasmuch as our heavenly Father's love to us infinitely transcends the possible affection of any earthly parent, whilst His acts are all directed by unerring wisdom to our real and not merely to our apparent good. God loves us indeed with all the energy of Deity—with an omnipotence of love: the very uttermost sacrifice He volunteered to make that He might rescue us from the necessities of His absolute justice: for this world, sunk as it was in sin, corrupt and abominable as it was in the sight of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, He yet so loved as to give his only-begotten Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life¹. This, brethren, is the name of God we petition may be hallowed:—God revealed to us as our Father and our Saviour; God who hath given us His own Son as a pledge that with Him he will truly give us all things; God who hath declared by His holy Apostle Paul, that if we but love him sincerely, however imperfectly, all things shall work together for our good²; God who thus announces that all the resources of boundless power, directed by unfailing wisdom, are continually employed in controlling the complex system of this

¹ John iii. 16.

² Rom. viii. 28.

world's government, throughout all the ramifications of apparent chance, and of the perverse designs of the unprincipled and ungodly, so as best to further the everlasting happiness of those who lay hold on the Redemption provided for them;—insomuch that if we will but hallow his name by believing his promises, and returning in some degree His unutterable love, we may with the most triumphant confidence exclaim, “All things are ours; whether life or death, things present or things to come: all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's¹!”

One word permit me in conclusion. The first thought the Lord's Prayer suggests is, the love of God to us—“Our Father.” The first petition it offers is for grace that we may know and feel and reciprocate that love—“Hallowed be thy Name.” Without the conviction that God does indeed love us, we cannot pray hopefully; without the predominating wish to love him in return, we cannot pray acceptably. Our first desire, if we really be God's dear children, will be for God himself; and all the changes and chances of this mortal life, all the vicissitudes of health and sickness, wealth and want, all our domestic afflictions and all the more painful trials of which our intercourse with our fellow-men is so lamentably fertile,—all these things are designed to lead us to our highest good; to the only support that can never fail, the only friend who never can betray; and to make us join

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

with the sober fervency of deep conviction in the ejaculation of the Psalmist; “Lord, whom have I in heaven but Thee! and there is none on earth I desire like unto Thee¹!”

¹ Psal. lxxiii. 25.

NOTE.

Ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα. The *τὸ* in this passage is plainly resumptive, and therefore requires the definite article to be understood before *ὄνομα*: where indeed some MSS. have it expressed; probably from the transcribers feeling that it is necessary to complete the sense. To enable the merely English reader to understand this, the passage as it runs in the best MSS. without the definite article before *ὄνομα*, may be thus most literally translated: “Gave him (a) name, the one (i. e.) above every name;” which is plainly equivalent to, “Gave him that name which is above every name.”

It is plain that *the name* thus definitely spoken of in the 9th verse, is referred to again as the name by which Jesus Christ is confessed in the 11th verse, viz. *Kύριος*; so that thus the word *Kύριος* in v. 11 is confined to its usage in the Septuagint to express יְהוָה, the word invariably used by the Jews in speaking, instead of the ineffable יְהוָה, the true pronunciation of which last is therefore unknown, as the vowels written with it are not its own, but those either of יְהוָה or אֱלֹהִים.

This is but one of a number of cases in which more accurate knowledge of Greek syntax, than was possessed by the translators of our Authorized Version, detects or brings out more clearly some assertion of the Divinity of our Blessed Lord.

SERMON II.

ST MATTH. vi. 10.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

ON the last occasion on which I addressed you, I endeavoured to explain the opening words and first petition of the Lord's Prayer. I called your attention to the fact, that though it is evidently addressed to God, the name of God is not once mentioned in that prayer: and I attempted to shew the deep significance of this remarkable suppression of his name, and to unfold the full meaning of that endearing title which is substituted for it: as not merely importing the affection of the Deity towards mankind in general, but describing his true and very relationship with those amongst mankind who are in Christ. And after thus exhibiting the real magnitude of the privilege we are instructed to assert as often as we pray to our Maker in the words of our Redeemer, I proceeded to examine the first petition. And here, considering that in scripture phraseology the name of God denotes God in so far as he is revealed to us, and recollecting that in this very prayer he is specially revealed to us as our Father,

we perceived that the words “ Hallowed be Thy Name” do specially and most appropriately beseech God that he would incline our hearts to love and venerate him with affection *the same in kind* as that we should bestow upon an earthly parent, though *infinitely higher in degree*: *the same in kind*, because God stands in the same relationship to the Christian which exists between an earthly parent and his child : *infinitely higher in degree*, inasmuch as the love we are called on to reciprocate infinitely transcends the possible affection of any earthly parent, whilst it wields all the resources of Divinity for the accomplishment of its beneficent designs.

On the present occasion we purpose contemplating as briefly as the nature of the subject will permit, the second and third petitions of this prayer : between which and the first there is an easy and evident connexion. Few ideas are in fact more nearly cognate than the ideas of filial affection and dutiful obedience: so closely indeed are they connected that it is impossible to conceive the former to exist where we do not find the latter : and hence the expressions which denote them are often interchanged : filial love is continually called by the name of duty ; whilst on the other hand the dutiful obedience of a good citizen to his country and its laws is constantly expressed by all the epithets of filial affection. Such at least is the phraseology which the masculine sense of our ancestors did not disdain to use in times when words expressive of love and tenderness were employed with a less sentimental profusion than at present. Keeping then this natural conjunc-

tion of the ideas of *love* and *duty* before the mind, we see that nothing can more naturally follow a petition that God may be *loved* as a *Father* than a petition that he may be *obeyed* as a *Sovereign*: and in this case the sequence is peculiarly appropriate: God being indeed the only Sovereign to whom belongs in all its truth that title which flattery has bestowed on so many earthly potentates—the title of *Father of his people*. Again how naturally and how beautifully does the petition “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” evolve itself out of the prayer “Thy kingdom come;” specifying as it does the *quality* and the *degree* of the obedience to God’s will which is imported in the full arrival of his kingdom, and describing it as an obedience, not *forced* but *free*, not *imperfect* but *entire*, not *partial* but *universal*: an obedience such as the angels yield through every moment of their existence, and in yielding which they attain the utmost development of all their powers, and find the supreme felicity of their whole being: an obedience the very direction to pray for whose extension over earth as it now prevails in heaven, does virtually promise that it shall ultimately unite in one glorious harmony of will and deed all creatures here below and all the blessed choirs above!

But this sketch of the general connexion which obtains between the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer by no means exhausts their meaning: in order to comprehend the full force of the words “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,” we must more closely investigate the nature of God’s king-

dom. And this we may best do, by first examining the phrase “God’s kingdom” in itself, and by then comparing the result with some of the chief passages in holy writ where that kingdom is either directly or by implication spoken of. And this process may serve, I trust, not merely to elucidate my text, but also to harmonize some statements of God’s Word, whose apparent conflict has for ages caused dissension in the Christian Church. May He who hath promised that He will be with his ambassadors alway even unto the end of the world, to aid them in expounding and enforcing whatever He hath taught and commanded, may He enable me to speak agreeably to the oracles of God, and you to hear with that reverence which the oracles of God enounced by the humblest of his ambassadors demand !

First then we cannot but suppose that a phrase which so repeatedly recurs in Scripture as the “kingdom of God” has been carefully selected as the best fitted to represent that which it is chosen to express. Whatever therefore is *absolutely essential* to the idea of a kingdom when the word is applied to earthly things, we must conceive to be conveyed by it also when it is applied to heavenly things : since otherwise its application to the latter would be purely arbitrary, and would be calculated not to elucidate, but to perplex. A kingdom then being a particular kind of government, whatever obtains of government in the abstract must likewise obtain of kingly government in particular. Now a very little consideration will suffice to shew that government is an organized system whereby

men are made to act and react on each other for the attainment of some good beyond the mere perpetuating of itself. What that good is which human government is intended to effect is another and a difficult question, to which various answers have been given: but whether we suppose it to be the "preserving of the people committed to its charge in wealth, peace, and godliness," as the compilers of our Prayer Book undoubtedly considered it¹, or whether we rather incline to that lower view which has lately become popular, and which regards the preservation of life and property as its only legitimate end, in either case it is equally evident that government exists not for the sake of merely perpetuating itself, but for the sake of some further object, unless it attain which, in some measure at least, it has no right to perpetuate itself. Furthermore, human government is not merely a means to an end, it is a means which consists in an organization of human instrumentality, partly moral, and partly physical. These ideas being essential to the very idea of human government, we have every reason to suppose them essential to the idea of divine government: we are therefore authorized to infer that God's kingdom, in so far as it exists on earth, is an organized system partly, at least, of human instrumentality, resting ultimately on the Divine Will, and which is intended to effect some ulterior good. Let us apply this general definition to certain notions which have widely prevailed, and we shall see what important consequences flow from them. Thus

¹ See Second Collect for the Queen in the Communion Office.

many, misled by a partial study of the Scriptures, have imagined that, because God's kingdom is often spoken of as having its seat *within* us, it consists *exclusively* in those relations which obtain between each individual soul and God. But this notion of its nature is incompatible with its being *an organized system of human instrumentality*; and thus we see that this definition requires that God's kingdom be *external* and *visible* as well as *internal* and *spiritual*. Again; it has been often argued—by scoffing infidels with malignant triumph, by distrustful Christians with melancholy apprehension,—that a kingdom of which such glorious things are spoken cannot be as yet established, whatever may hereafter be the case, in a world where the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are so predominant. Survey, cry they, survey the spectacle which Christian countries present: and then say where are the vestiges of that beneficent influence which is to diffuse universal righteousness and peace? To this objection, too, the definition I have given affords a satisfactory reply. For since human beings are the agents, more or less voluntary, whereby this government is worked, and since all human beings are more or less imperfect and corrupt, we must infer that God's kingdom, unless intended to produce an instantaneous and utter change, contrary to the analogy of all his other dealings, must partake for the present of the imperfection of its agents: in other words, *the imperfection of its appearance is no proof against the reality of its existence.*

Let us now proceed to apply these two deductions

from the definition I have given to some passages of Holy Writ. The first deduction, viz. that God's kingdom as being an organized system partly at least of human instrumentality must be *external* and *visible* as well as *internal* and *spiritual*, might authorize us to expect that in different passages it would be very differently spoken of, according as its external or internal aspect best suited the immediate connexion and the general purpose of the writer. And this we actually find to be the case. In the Old Testament the predominating view of it is that which contemplates it *externally*. Thus in the 2nd Psalm the Messiah, the Anointed Vicegerent of the Almighty, is described as the successful rival of the kings of the earth for earthly rule and sway: in glowing language the Psalmist announces the decree whereby he is enthroned as Universal Potentate on the hill of Zion, in all the dread magnificence which attends upon resistless power; exhorts the nations to cease their impotent resistance to Him who shall rule the disobedient with a rod of iron, and lays special emphasis on the severity which shall break the stubborn wills that will not bend. Here we have the external aspect of God's kingdom almost alone. In the 45th Psalm again the Messiah is apostrophized as girding his sword upon his thigh and riding in triumphant majesty through the vanquished nations; but in evident allusion to the spiritual aspect of his kingdom, his triumph is attributed to spiritual causes,—to truth, meekness and righteousness. The 110th Psalm is yet more remarkable because it insists peculiarly on

that organization of human co-operation and mutual influence which we have seen to be essential to the idea of God's kingdom upon earth: for it describes the Messiah not as a solitary though resistless conqueror, extending his sway simply by his own right arm without the auxiliary instrumentality of man; but as a warrior at the head of a vast army, composed, not of angels,—not of invisible though active spirits,—but of human beings; particular stress being laid upon the fact that in the day of his power his people shall be *all willingness* (as the Hebrew may be rendered) to execute his mandates: that *the dew of his youth*,—all those who are in the fresh bloom of early vigour,—shall joyfully enlist under his banner, and march under whatever hardships to take vengeance on his foes. Still more strikingly does Daniel insist on the external aspect of God's kingdom in that passage which is the key to his whole book: I mean his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's first prophetic dream. For there, as you will recollect, the stone cut out without hands which breaks in pieces the great image and fills the whole earth, is explained to mean a *kingdom* which the God of heaven shall set up in the days of those kings whom the image represents: and which shall destroy and supersede all other kingdoms. Now this, observe, it could not do unless it were in some measure of the same kind with them, though different in its origin. If God's kingdom is to supersede the kingdoms of the earth, it must in some sense be an earthly kingdom. Nor is there any thing opposed to this conclusion in the cele-

brated declaration of the Saviour, My kingdom is not of this world : since the original denotes, My kingdom is not *out¹* of this world, does not emanate from this world : is not worldly in the *source*, though all prophecy conspires in declaring that it is worldly in the *seat*, and many passages constrain us to admit that it is worldly in the *administration* of its power. And in like manner the most evangelical of prophets draws dazzling pictures of the external and visible glories of that kingdom which is to be swayed by the Wonderful, the Councillor : upon whose shoulders is to be imposed the government which He alone is competent to wield who is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace² : and whilst in this passage he particularly dwells on the internal blessings which his government shall ensure in the universal prevalence of order and peace, of judgment and of justice ; in other places he speaks in the most emphatic terms of the external magnificence of his kingdom : of the general homage which shall be rendered to it by all kings and nations : nay, of its transforming universal nature into the outward expression of its inward prosperity and spiritual happiness³ : at that time when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

That these and the like predictions should have greatly influenced the expectations formed by the Jews on the subject of God's kingdom, can be no matter of

¹ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. John xviii. 36.

² Isai. ix. 6, 7.

³ Isai. lx.

surprise : as little may we be surprised that our Saviour deemed it necessary to counteract this their exclusive bias by insisting particularly on its *internal aspect*. Indeed, did we consider merely the wants of his immediate hearers, we might rather be surprised at his alluding to its external aspect so frequently as he really does. For it is remarkable that in the whole of our Lord's recorded teaching there is but one passage in which the external aspect of his kingdom is wholly disregarded : I allude to the passage in St Luke, at the 17th ch., vers. 20, 21 ; where, in answer to the Pharisees' inquiry when the kingdom of God should come, he said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here ! or, Lo there ! for behold the kingdom of God is *within you*." And even this passage, though it *ignores*, does not *deny* the external aspect of God's kingdom : for our Lord does not say that it shall not be observed when it is *come*, but, (what is very different) that it shall not be observed in the *act of coming* : that it shall steal gently and unperceivedly into that world which it is destined to remodel, and be known to exist only by its beneficent effects. Just as it is impossible to determine the precise moment when the returning light of day begins to chase the shadows of the night : though none can help confessing the agency and presence of the sun when he has actually risen.

This imperceptibility of the commencement of God's kingdom, ascribed as it expressly is by the Redeemer to its seat being within us, leads us now to consider it in

its internal aspect. All government we may truly say is based on the moral and therefore the internal nature of man : even the physical force which it wields to procure obedience is itself entirely dependent upon moral motives, and would be entirely useless were it not exerted simply to enforce moral convictions. Much more then must this position hold of that government which is called God's kingdom : the essential difference between which and all human government consists indeed, according to our Saviour's declaration, precisely in this point, that it rejects all physical force for its support and propagation. "If my kingdom were of this world," did it emanate (as I have before explained it) from this world, as all merely human kingdoms do, "then would my servants fight : but now is my kingdom not from hence¹:" and therefore, the suppressed conclusion is, they do not fight. With reference to this spiritual kingdom, therefore, the Saviour in another place declares, He that taketh the sword,—for its defence or propagation,—shall perish by the sword². This then is the essential difference between God's kingdom and all human monarchies, not that it is not external as well as internal, but that it entirely discards the aid of physical force for its extension or support ; that "the weapons of its warfare are not carnal ;" though they have been and will be found "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds³." As the source of its power is a spirit, so is the proper seat of its power the spirit, and the proper method of its working spiritual : it is to

¹ John xviii. 36.

² Matt. xxvi. 52.

³ 2 Cor. x. 4.

influence the conduct of its subjects not *from without*, by an external law according to which our conduct must be externally adapted whatever may be our internal convictions; but from *within*, by an internal change of which the external conduct shall be the natural and unforced expression. Thus St Paul¹ declares that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; does not consist, that is to say, in certain external rules of temperance or abstinence, (as many even now seem to think it does,) but the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost : its essence i. e. consists in those spiritual influences which produce that spiritual state.

But these considerations in no wise contradict our previously attained results. There is a wide difference between physical force and external agency : and though God's kingdom dispenses with the former, we have seen that the latter is essential to its very existence. In fact without external agency, internal convictions cannot be produced. " How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? and how shall they preach except they be sent ?" And this climax of the eloquent apostle of the Gentiles is especially remarkable because it not merely insists on the necessity of external agency, but on the necessity of that agency being regularly *organized*. Not only is a preacher essential to the mission, but a mission is essential to the preacher. The persons whom

¹ Rom. xiv. 17.

² Rom. x. 14, 15.

St Paul declares necessary to the diffusion of the faith are persons who preach not only because they are *capable* of preaching, but because they are *sent* to preach. Thus we see how Scripture is consistent with itself on the supposition that God's kingdom is a regularly organized system of divine government, *internal* in its *influences*, but *external* in the *means* by which those influences are applied. And this supposition further shews that it must necessarily be both *gradual in its progress over the earth*, and *imperfect in its progressive state*. Let us consider for a moment how beautifully this double truth is illustrated in our Saviour's teaching. In the 13th chapter of St Matthew there is, as you are aware, a whole set of parables, all describing and illustrating the nature of God's kingdom. Take that parable first in which he compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. Now the leavening process is, as you are aware, gradual, proceeding from one particle to another of the mass; but not merely is it gradual, it is also incomplete in the very particles which transmit it to others until it have pervaded the whole mass: no one particle being completely leavened until the whole is leavened. Just so God's kingdom is destined to extend its sway by gradual progress from man to man until the whole human race shall have been brought into its allegiance: but until that consummation shall have been attained, it is vain to expect that it will reign absolute and paramount in the breast of any individual of that

race. How completely does this parable thus meet the objection which I before shewed on grounds of mere abstract reason to be untenable ; the objection, I mean, that Christianity must needs be false because it never actually effects that entire change of heart and conduct which it professes to effect ! How completely too does it meet the objection against missionary exertions abroad which is derived from there being still so much heathenism at home ! since it shews that we are not to expect the full triumph of truth at home until it shall have been universally diffused abroad ! Again, if the kingdom of God be an external arrangement administered by man for spiritual purposes, we may reasonably expect that it will *externally* affect many on whom it does not produce its intended spiritual change : that it will induce many to act in a certain way in order to obtain the good opinion of others, or the worldly advantages which may be connected with its administration ; from motives of worldly interest in short, and not of sincere conviction ; whilst even in those who are sincerely convinced, it may often be difficult to assign the precise degree in which real conviction sways their actions, and not worldly interest : we may expect that hypocrites will be found not merely amongst the great mass of professing Christians, but perhaps even specially amongst those who are sent to preach : since worldly applause and influence is the natural and almost necessary consequence of an apparently successful ministry, and may therefore easily induce men's offering to be sent whom God has never called.

These expectations are fully authorized by the parable in which our Lord compares his kingdom to a man sowing wheat in his field amongst which an enemy sows tares. And when the Lord of the harvest forbids his servants attempting to root up the tares, lest in so doing they should likewise uproot the wheat, he forbids by anticipation the sometimes well-meant but always more or less presumptuous attempt to exclude from the congregation of Christ's people here on earth all who will not be found to be hereafter his in heaven ; an attempt which is the very essence of sectarianism, and which has always generated and fostered hypocrisy and spiritual pride to a pernicious extent : the really sincere being often the least externally commended to approbation. And so important did the Saviour judge this caution that he repeats it even more emphatically still in that parable in which he compares the kingdom of God to a drag-net which encloses a multitude of fishes good and bad : the very point of the comparison being the necessarily indiscriminate mixture of good and bad who are enclosed within its pale : whilst to obviate the remotest possibility of mistaking the application of this comparison to the present state of God's kingdom, in his interpretation of it He reserves for the angels at the end of the world the task of separating the good and bad, the sincere and the insincere, the wicked and the righteous, who are at present always inseparably and often not only indiscriminately but indiscriminably intermingled.

And here too, as in so many other passages of Holy

Writ, we find a prophetic anticipation and refutation of the dangerous errors of that false Church which in these times seems to be assuming unwonted spirits, as though, like the giant of mythology, it had derived fresh vigour from every defeat and fall it has experienced. For could words be devised which should more plainly contradict its blasphemous pretensions than this very parable? What means the separation between good and bad at the end of the world by the ministry of angels, if that separation is effected already in this world by the ministry of priests? What means the sifting of the wheat from the tares, and the tying the latter up in bundles to be burned by those reapers who are expressly declared by the Saviour to be the angels, if the wheat and the tares are already in this life separated from each other by the very terms of Church-communion? If as many as die in the bosom of that Church which claims an ¹ infallibility that Christ has never promised to His Church—if as many as die in her bosom after confession and absolution and extreme unction are ensured against ultimate rejection, though not against temporary punishment,—if the viaticum administered with the prescribed precautions and after due examination saves the soul from everlasting burnings though not from the expiatory fires of purgatory,—where then is the mixture of good and bad, of wheat and of tares, in God's kingdom here on earth? Even now there are none bad—there are no tares in that kingdom: differences of goodness there may be, but there is none bad—no not one.

¹ See Note A. at end of Sermon.

Alas ! for the delusion which trusts in the word of man and in ordinances which Christ has *not* prescribed, in opposition to the plainest declarations of the Word of God ! Alas ! for that fatal bias of the human heart to falsehood which has since the foundation of the world required and has so frequently obtained of God's ambassadors that they should speak smooth things and prophesy deceits ! And how strangely do we not find in this as in numberless other instances that extremes meet—that the most apparently opposite errors ultimately coincide ! For do not the Romanist and the sectarian agree in the claiming for God's kingdom in its present state an immunity from foul admixture which God's Son expressly cautioned his apostles against either expecting or attempting to effect¹ ?

Time will not permit me at present to pursue the subject further: when I am next permitted to address you, I trust I shall be able to carry out the investigation of the nature of God's kingdom particularly as regards its present and future form, the great purpose it is intended to accomplish, and its prospects of accomplishing that purpose. But the considerations which have hitherto engaged us not merely admit but demand some application to ourselves.

If such be indeed the nature of God's kingdom, if it comprise good and bad—wheat and tares—the saved and the lost alike,—let us take heed not to rest satisfied with an external allegiance—the homage of the lips, when the heart may be far from God ! Examine yourselves whe-

¹ See Note B. at end of Sermon.

ther ye be really or only nominally in the faith: prove your own selves! Outwardly, the very fact of our coming to this house of prayer is a profession of the faith—an act of homage: but does not the comparative thinness of the assemblage that will soon be left within these walls argue how merely outward that profession too generally is¹! Outwardly, we have called Christ Lord, Lord, this day repeatedly: outwardly we have bent the head in lowly reverence at that Name which is above every name: outwardly we have declared Thou art the King of Glory: why then will this spacious edifice be presently almost deserted by the multitude who now crowd it? why will that rite on which the Saviour laid such special stress—that supper which with such intense desire he desired to eat with his disciples, and which he bade them celebrate until he should come again in token of their loving recollection—why will that most solemn, most impressive, most beneficial rite be partaken of only by one in every ten who have called themselves this day by the name of Christ? Is only one in every ten here present convinced that it is really necessary not only to call him Lord, but to do those things which he hath commanded²? Is only one in every ten here present willing to commit himself wholly to the service of his Redeemer? Is only one in every ten here present conscious of sincerity of purpose in the eyes of Him before whom all hearts be open, all

¹ This Sermon was preached on Advent Sunday, on which day the Lord's Supper was administered.

² Luke vi. 46.

desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid? Dare only one in every ten here present come to the Lord's Table because conscience tells you that if you eat and drank there you would eat and drink unworthily? And knowing as you do, theoretically at least, the absolute uncertainty of life—knowing that each of you may this very night have your soul required of you—is only one in every ten here present anxious to be so prepared as to be able to meet his God whenever God shall summon him?

Oh! my brethren, if the secret consciousness of your own unfitness keep you from this hallowed ordinance, if you are determined to hasten out of this place as being too “dreadful¹” for you during the celebration of these holy mysteries, if the very assurance of Christ's love, the very pledge of his forgiveness, repel instead of attracting you, know then assuredly that there is within you some secret “way of wickedness²”, some hidden deep-seated iniquity which you would fain dissemble and cloke from your own eyes—forgetting that you cannot thereby conceal it from the Omniscient! Be sure there is some latent mischief which at present may be hardly felt except in the distance which it constrains you to keep from God—in the haze which it throws over all your thoughts and conceptions of the eternal world! And is this state satisfactory, is it safe thus to go on from day to day in a dreamy indistinctness,—not knowing, not proving your own selves, lest examination should discover the unwelcome truth that you are *not* in the faith? Let me most affectionately be-

¹ Gen. xxviii. 17.

² Ps. cxxxix. 24.

seech you, as you value your immortal souls, as you know that you must ultimately quit this world, as you believe that He whose Advent in great humility we this day commemorate will hereafter surely come again in glorious majesty to be your Judge—let me beseech you by all the dark terrors of an accusing conscience, by all the mercies promised to sincere repentance, no longer to be satisfied to live on in this frightful uncertainty! Let me beseech you now, while it is called *to-day*, to hear the gracious voice which invites you to arise and go to your Father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son!

NOTE A.

The Romish Church has indeed never *officially* claimed infallibility; but this claim, always made on its behalf by its apologists, and never disowned by itself, is well known as being the chief means by which perversions to Romanism have (more especially of late) been effected.

NOTE B.

Thus the idea of Count Zinzendorf, who may be considered the founder of modern Moravianism (a man of a genius which has never been thoroughly appreciated), was to have what he called *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, a small community of *real* amongst the large body of *professing* Christians: and this idea was attempted to be carried out by the Moravians, by receiving (as they termed it) none into their inner body except those on

whom the lot fell, by which, quoting Proverbs xvi. 33, they imagined that God would in every case signify who were real Christians, and therefore deserving of reception into the *ecclesia*.

This is perhaps the most remarkable instance of what is blamed in the sermon; but a similar idea does in fact lie at the root of various sects, though it be now less openly avowed than it was in former times; e. g. consider the assertion made more particularly by the early Methodists, of its being in all cases possible and indeed necessary to ascertain not only the reality but even the exact moment of the change to which they applied the scriptural title of the new birth; so that their community should consist only of those on whom they were certain that this change had actually passed: of none, i. e. to speak more properly, but actually converted characters.

SERMON III.

ST. MATTH. vi. 10.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

WHEN I last addressed you on these words, I was obliged to confine myself to the most general investigation of the nature of God's kingdom. On that occasion we saw, taking reason as our guide, that the very term *kingdom* obliges us to suppose (unless indeed we fancy that the sacred writers use terms at random,) that God's kingdom is a society governed in the highest resort by the Deity through the medium of regularly organized human instrumentality: and must therefore in the very nature of things be partly internal and partly external: internal, because it rests on convictions of the mind; external, because these convictions can neither be produced nor become active except through the medium of the body. We next saw how completely these deductions of pure reason tally with the statements found in Holy Writ; since we there find God's kingdom spoken of sometimes as partaking of the same nature with those earthly monarchies it is ultimately destined to supersede, whilst in other passages its inward character is exclusively insisted

on: and we observed how satisfactorily these at first sight seemingly opposing statements are harmonized by applying to them the previously ascertained deductions of mere reason; insomuch that were it not for the generally admitted, but, alas! not generally felt perverseness of the human mind when exerting itself on divine things, we might be surprised that statements so easily reconciled, and requiring to be compared and reconciled before they can be singly understood, should for ages have caused dissension in the Christian Church.

Pursuing then the subject farther, we perceived how these principles satisfactorily account at once for the gradual progress and the imperfect development of God's kingdom. For if it be a society actuated and acting through human instrumentality, we see that it cannot extend itself except under the limitations imposed by those laws that regulate the mutual agency of men: and as moral motives are declared to be the only legitimate means of conquest in a kingdom which is not earthly in its origin, the conquest, however ultimately sure, will be slow in proportion to the greatness of that change of man's moral nature which it implies: whilst on the other hand, according to those laws which regulate the development of the race at large, it were unreasonable to expect the complete predominance of any one moral principle (not to speak of a whole set of such principles) in any one individual until the race at large is imbued with them. And in this inference from plain and universal experience we found a complete refutation of the cavil that Christianity

must needs be false because it promises what it does not perform—because in no one follower of its doctrines do we see the perfect change it professes to effect. For if we remember that Christianity, though of supernatural introduction and exercising supernatural influence, does yet not supersede the natural laws of development and progress,—as even of its Divine Founder we are told that though in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, he nevertheless grew in grace and in favour with God as well as man,—we shall perceive that we are warranted to expect the same gradual progress and the same imperfection of development during that progress in the change which Christianity professes to effect, as in any other moral changes effected in the human race. And this expectation too we found was actually borne out by the express words of the Saviour, more especially in that parable wherein he compares the kingdom of God to leaven hid in meal until the whole was leavened¹: the very point of the comparison being the gradual diffusion of the principle of change, and the imperfection of the change in any one part until the whole is changed. And here I cannot help giving a passing notice to another application of the law of gradual development. Some men may be distinguished beyond their fellows by a comparative moral superiority, and may lead the way to a better understanding or a more general acknowledgment of some one or more moral principles: but it is not the law of our nature that any one such principle should be per-

¹ Matt. xiii. 33.

fectedly ascertained and fully practised in all its bearings by any one individual of the race, long before the race at large appreciate it. The application of this to the case of our Saviour is almost too obvious to require a formal statement. Were he merely man, he would be a singular and monstrous exception to this general law. It is for those to explain away this difficulty who, in point-blank opposition to the whole tenour of God's Word, consider him as merely man, in order to avoid excepting him from general laws.

Having thus discussed the nature of God's kingdom in its most general shape, we now proceed to examine it more particularly with reference to its form, its purpose and its prospects.

And first with regard to its *form*. It must have already occurred to you that there is another scriptural expression nearly related to that which we are investigating, if not absolutely synonymous with it: the Church of God is often spoken of in such a way as almost to identify it with the kingdom of God. Convinced however that the language of Scripture is always perfectly appropriate, we must suppose that there is some difference of meaning between these phrases, since otherwise the employment of two where one would suffice would be not only unnecessary, but embarrassing. And this difference seems capable of being traced up to one point: viz. this: that whereas the kingdom of God is used when special reference is made to the *Governor*, the *Church* of God is used when special reference is made to the *governed*.

In the former phrase the *Ruler*, in the latter the *subjects*, are the respectively predominant ideas. In *absolute* meaning both phrases ultimately coincide, in *relative* meaning they diverge. Let us examine how this divergence of relation affects their use. As the kingdom of God is an absolute monarchy, whose constitution and laws depend entirely on the Sovereign's will, whilst on the other hand, the *machinery* for carrying out these laws resides entirely in those for whose benefit they are designed, it is natural that when the constitution and laws of it are spoken of, *the Kingdom of God* should be the phrase employed, as pointing to the Divine will from whence they emanate: whilst when the machinery for carrying them out is spoken of, *the Church of God* is the phrase preferably used, because it points to the human agency by which they are executed. Here then we have the first definite and tangible difference of application: and hence immediately results a second. For though the laws remain the same, as being the unalterable expression of an unalterable will, the machinery by which those laws are to be carried out may and must vary according to the varying state of the persons by whom it is to be worked: and hence we have this farther difference of use between the two phrases, that the Kingdom of God is used in a more extensive and unrestricted sense than the Church of God: embracing all the successive phases of the divine administration of which the Church on earth is only one. And thus we see that the *Church* is as nearly as possible synonymous with the *Kingdom of God*

in *its present state and form*. So that our enquiry into the form of God's kingdom as now existing results in an enquiry into the form of the Church militant here in earth.

But this is a subject which may well discourage the most daring investigator: a subject than which none has been more fruitful of misunderstanding and of disunion. To such an extent has this proceeded that the very word Church has become the badge of party: by some almost idolatrously extolled, by others superstitiously depreciated. But these unhappy circumstances give no excuse to those who are sworn to declare as far as in them lies the whole counsel of God, for avoiding the discussion of that through which God's wisdom, according to St Paul, is pre-eminently declared¹: and if it be incumbent on every Christian to give a reason of his hope, so must it surely be incumbent on him to give an explanation of his faith. Now every time we meet to worship God, we profess that we believe in the holy Catholic Church, and on the morning of each returning Lord's Day we add to this a declaration that we believe this Catholic Church to be *one*². What then do we mean by this twice-repeated declaration? What do we mean by speaking of the Church as Catholic or *Universal*, and as *one*? Some will answer this question by saying, that the one universal Church is the company of all those who truly believe in Christ, and shall be ultimately saved. And

¹ Ephes. iii. 10.

² I believe in the holy Catholic Church—*Apostles' Creed*.
I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church —*Nicene Creed*.

undoubtedly they compose a body two characteristic marks of which are unity and universality. But it is obvious, on the other hand, that as this body is not ascertainable by human knowledge, so is it not available for human purposes. 'The Lord,' and He alone, 'knoweth them that are His': and as we have seen that the kingdom of God must have an external and visible administration, how can the Church correspond with this kingdom if the Church be invisible? Nor is this the only argument against this way of understanding the expressions of the Creeds. After careful examination, I am constrained to say that it is inconsistent with the general tenor and language of the New Testament. In one passage, and in one alone, do I find any approximation to what I am obliged to call the modern idea of the Invisible Church: I refer to the words used by the apostolic author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the 12th chapter and 23rd verse: where speaking of the difference between the two economies, that of Moses and that of Christ, he says, 'But ye are come to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.' And here it is to be remarked that the word Church is carefully defined and guarded by other words, so as to remove all ambiguity and to obviate the possible mistakes which might have arisen from its being employed in a different sense from that in which it generally occurs. And the very care with which it is thus defined and guarded gives sufficient evidence that the writer here

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

used it in no familiar sense. In fact the prominence which is often now given to the idea of the invisible Church seems to be mainly owing to the difficulty which Christians have felt since the Reformation of reconciling the unity of the Church with the multiplicity of its divisions. But we must not forget that we are now examining the question not in subservience to the disturbing force of human errors and human passions, but on the ground of Scripture truth. Whatever we find laid down in Scripture, or whatever results from thence, we are bound to take, however it may disagree with preconceived opinions. Now if we look through the passages in which the word Church occurs in the New Testament, we shall find that they are all reducible to two classes: those in which the word is used of a body of professed Christians in one particular place, and those in which it denotes the whole body of professed Christians in all places. As a sample of the former we may take the greeting sent by the Churches of Asia to the Church at Corinth: as a sample of the latter, the declaration of Paul that the Church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth¹. The individual Churches therefore mentioned in the New Testament are the integral parts which compose the one universal Church of which St Paul speaks in such exalted terms, and in which we every recurring Lord's Day declare that we

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15. I cannot accept that punctuation of the passage which would begin a new sentence with the words *στύλος καὶ ἐδραιώμα τῆς ἀληθείας*.

believe. What then, we may ask, was the sign of that unity which bound together all those parts in the Apostles' times? Not, it should seem, exact sameness of ecclesiastical constitution: for it is difficult to read the Epistles without coming to the conclusion that, for a time at least, there were differences in the arrangements made in the several Churches by the Apostles¹: the several orders of the Christian ministry seem not to have been instituted all at once nor by express divine command, but rather to have been introduced from time to time according to the exigencies of the case; nor do we find them all existing in every Church. But through all the differences that probably existed in those earliest times, we nevertheless find two marks of unity indelibly impressed on all the Churches: *fellowship with the Apostles*, evincing itself in obedience to their authority, and *fellowship with Christ*, evincing itself in the constant uniform observance of the Sacraments which Christ himself had instituted. To the great importance of these latter rites the account of their institution and the care with which they were solemnized sufficiently testify. The only rites prescribed by Christ himself, prescribed by him too at the two most solemn moments of his earthly sojourn, immediately before those events with which they are respectively connected—the Eucharist immediately before that atoning death for sin which is displayed and applied in the Eucharist, Baptism immediately before our Lord's ascension into heaven to send down the Holy

¹ See note A at the end of Sermon.

Ghost, whose regenerating influence is displayed and applied in Baptism,—we find the two Sacraments in use at the very foundation of the Church: the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost being at once baptized, and at once proceeding to consummate their allegiance by breaking bread in their new Master's name¹. And so necessary were the Sacraments then deemed that when the Holy Ghost descended miraculously on Cornelius and his family, so far from superseding the necessity, it was urged by St Peter as merely warranting the lawfulness of their being baptized²: whilst St Paul declares to the Corinthians³ that the order for the administration of the Eucharist he had himself received by personal communication from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, (for this is the force of the words in the original⁴) and not by transmitted testimony. Nor were they merely instituted without comment or explanation, as rites of perpetual obligation and prescribed invariable form. Not only do we find them throughout the New Testament in constant use amidst all the differences which seem in the earliest times to have existed in the different Churches; not only do we find Baptism the invariable introduction to the Church, and the Lord's Supper the (apparently) invariable purpose for which the Church assembles⁵,—circumstances which mark indeed the im-

¹ Acts ii. 41, 42.

² Acts x. 47.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

⁴ ἐγὼ γὰρ παρελαβον.

⁵ There can be little doubt that at first the Eucharist was solemnized at every Christian meeting.

portance, but do not explain the nature of these rites;—but we possess in the only Evangelist who has not mentioned their institution a record of our Saviour's teaching on the subject¹. As in the 3rd chapter of St John's Gospel he declares that no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven except he be born from above² of water and of the Spirit, so in the 6th chapter of the same Gospel he declares that unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man we have no life in us: that without the nutriment afforded by the believing participation of the Eucharist the life communicated by the Spirit in regeneration will expire³. Nor is it possible to imagine anything more admirably adapted to their intended purpose than these two rites devised by the Saviour's wisdom and enjoined by him with such peculiar emphasis, as their standing alone—the only rites enjoined by Christ himself—imports; for as God's kingdom is partly external and partly internal, so in the Sacraments we have both these elements,—the external and the internal,—indissolubly blended; the outward and visible sign being so contrived as to exhibit the nature of the inward and spiritual grace which is inseparably attached to the right reception⁴ of the outward sign:

¹ St Luke indeed does not directly mention our Saviour's having instituted baptism: but the accounts he repeatedly gives in the book of Acts of converts being baptized may be considered as supplying an indirect proof of baptism having been enjoined by the Saviour.

² ἀναθεν.

³ Note B.

⁴ Note C.

so that the Sacraments visibly inculcate by their universal and carefully prescribed invariable form the great facts which they express, and by their voiceless but most significant symbolic teaching continually protest against vital error. For as in Baptism we are shewn the necessity of dying to sin and rising again unto righteousness, and the impossibility of doing this except by the aid of the Holy Ghost producing in us the new creature, whilst the name into¹ which we are baptized assures us that God's power will henceforward be exerted in behalf of this new creature through every function of his revealed existence, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so in the Lord's Supper we behold Christ as it were set forth before our very eyes as crucified in the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine, whilst in the individual partaking of the bread and wine we have the pledge of his being crucified for each individual who partakes in faith².

Here then we have the essential tokens, or rather the essential constitution of God's kingdom in the apostolic times: wherever the two Sacraments were properly administered, and wherever fellowship with the Apostles was maintained, there, under whatever temporary differences or imperfections of Church polity, the kingdom of God was established, there the Church of Christ existed in its unity in all things essential to the same.

Now, to apply these two essential marks of unity to our own times, we must not forget that to maintain fel-

¹ *eis.*

² Note D.

lowship with the Apostles it was necessary to obey the regulations which they introduced: and as in one passage¹ St Paul meets anticipated contentiousness on a point of comparatively small importance by an appeal to the general custom used by himself and the other Churches, which implies that the general custom of the Churches, introduced with the sanction of the Apostles, is a sufficient authority for any regulations on points not directly or indirectly legislated for by Christ himself, it hence results, that whatever we find generally customary in the latter period of the apostolic age, when the Apostles had had sufficient experience to enable them to devise the best constitution for the infant Church, we must deem as only inferior in authority to that which is directly ordained by Christ himself; and the same conclusion naturally holds good with regard to whatever we find matter of universal custom in the period immediately following the apostolic age: since its being matter of universal custom in that period is a clear proof of its having been such before: for it is impossible that Churches scattered over the whole civilized globe, and which, by reason of their distance from each other, could have little, if any, intercourse, should have had one kind of constitution universally in the latter apostolic age, and another and very different constitution universally in the period directly following the apostolic age. Though, therefore, we find few traces of episcopal government in the New Testament, yet, since in the century which begins with the death of the Apostle

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 16.

John we find that government universal and unquestioned, we are constrained to recognize it as of apostolic usage and introduction, and therefore of authority only inferior to that which the two Sacraments enjoined by Christ possess: nor can we acquit any portion of the universal Church in modern times of great presumption in discarding it, except when, as was actually the case with the German Churches at the time of the Reformation, the hard choice lay between Apostolic government and Apostolic doctrine, it being impossible to combine them both. In such a case we must acknowledge the propriety of clinging to that which is plainly essential because actually enjoined, at the sacrifice of what cannot be deemed equally essential, because it is nowhere actually enjoined. But separatists amongst ourselves cannot derive the slightest countenance for their unauthorized procedures from the example of those great Reformers, who were obliged to run into apparent schism in order to escape from heresy¹.

Much of what has been said in definition of the form, goes to explain the purpose of God's kingdom; and I would therefore only briefly notice what I conceive to be too much overlooked. Unquestionably, the great object of the Gospel is to bring sinners to their Saviour, in order that he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. But the very circumstance that this object is attained through the medium of an organized society such as we have seen God's kingdom to be, and the very manner in

¹ Note E.

which that society is constituted, prove that the greatest amount of individual good will be effected by making individuals as much as possible dependent on each other, and as much as possible interested in each other. And this very principle is so clearly stated by St Paul¹, so much stress is laid by him on the mutual necessity which binds together all the individual members of the Christian body, that it is difficult to conceive how, in the face of his reasoning, a solitary and selfish piety should for ages have been considered the nearest approach to perfection which our present state allows. And though we are perhaps not likely to fall into ideas of professed monasticism, we must nevertheless be on our guard against acting in the very spirit of monasticism by dwelling each on his own interests only, and forgetting the interests of the whole body to which he belongs. The purpose of God's kingdom cannot be adequately carried out unless we cling with all our hearts to the Church, by belonging to which we are in fact alone members of Christ; for the Church is Christ's body², and except in and by the Church, the Sacraments, the highest means of grace, cannot even exist.

When, therefore, before putting up any private petition for ourselves, we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we virtually vow supreme allegiance to that kingdom as it now exists, and bind ourselves to make its promotion our first and darling object: we promise to obey its two great fundamental laws in devout and simple faith, and not to

¹ 1 Cor. xii.

² Eph. i. 23.

aim at being wise beyond what is written by disregarding and undervaluing them : we promise that we will endeavor to promote peace, unity, and concord between all the different Churches which evince that they belong to God's kingdom by maintaining in their purity these its fundamental laws, and by teaching men accordingly : whilst at the same time we engage to carry out the good intentions and advance the prosperity of that particular Church which has cherished our unconscious infancy and has enlisted our mature convictions; to know them which labour amongst us in the Lord, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake ; to listen to their instructions with reverent attention, not for the gratification of the taste, but for the edification of the heart and instruction of the mind ; to pray for them ; to aid them in every plan of usefulness ; to maintain in decency and order the worship of the God of order ; to set the example ourselves and to give every facility to others of assembling and meeting together to adore Him; to do all we can to spread the knowledge of our Father's love, so that His Name may be known and hallowed, His saving health diffused throughout all nations.

And since, as we have seen, the imperfections which now so grievously prevail shall never be completely removed until God's kingdom shall have come in all its fulness, we do in fact profess, as often as we pray for the coming of that kingdom, that we will not allow ourselves to be discouraged by those imperfections, whether in ourselves or others, but go on in cheerful hope to do all we

can for the advancement of a cause which we are sure must ultimately triumph gloriously: that we will lift up our hearts beyond the scenes of sin and misery which here surround us to Him who must reign until he hath put all sin and misery beneath His feet: and that we will set our affections on that glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour when he shall come down from heaven in like manner as he ascended up, to destroy the rebels who would not have this man to reign over them, to dispel the clouds which now veil the Divine Administration, and in visible and transcendent Majesty to sway the beneficent sceptre of universal righteousness, and joy, and peace! These, my brethren, are the implied engagements into which we enter as often as we recite the well-known words, Thy kingdom come: and Oh! that we felt them in all their force, and believed the truths involved in them with all our hearts! So would the fulfilment of the prayer speedily rejoice the drooping spirit of universal Christendom, and change the longing of expectation into the satisfaction of assured enjoyment!

It remains that I very briefly touch on that future state of God's kingdom to which these considerations have conducted us. And here I must altogether decline any discussion of the vast subject of unfulfilled prophecy. In truth I have always shrunk from a topic which seems to demand a union of qualities hardly ever found together: a union of vast learning, and a highly poetic mind with great critical acumen and sobriety of judgment. But whatever consideration I have cautiously and even

timorously given to the subject, has inclined me, in spite of a naturally sceptical bias, to believe that a period is approaching when the Redeemer shall visibly and personally rule the kingdom of God on earth: and that to this period are to be referred the chief triumphs of that kingdom as well over merely earthly monarchies as over those spiritual powers which have for ages distracted the Christian Church by the introduction and dissemination of false religious principles. The prophecies which on a former occasion I quoted from the Psalms, from Isaiah, and from Daniel, seem incapable of being fully realized except on the supposition of such an actual personal reign. Again: the total destruction of error is nowhere attributed *solely* to the gradual progress of truth: the Gospel is indeed to be preached to all nations before the coming of the Son of Man, but only, observe, as *a witness to them*¹, not as destined to convert them: and the last and worst form of error which St Paul calls the man of sin², be that what it may, is not to be put down by any other power than the manifestation³ of the presence or coming of the Lord. Nor is this conclusion at all at variance with actual experience: for the history of this world is a history not so much of continuous progress, as of epochs of startlingly rapid advance preceded and followed by long intervals of rest. Great changes have generally been the result of almost momentary revolutions: witness the Introduction

¹ Matt. xxiv. 14.

² 2 Thess. ii. 3.

³ This is probably the most correct rendering of the words, *τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας*, 2 Thess. ii. 8.

of Christianity ; witness the Reformation of Christianity ; and contrast the amazing change which then took place within fifty years with the torpor of previous and the apathy of succeeding centuries. And if this principle obtains even in changes (like the Reformation) that cannot be called miraculous, though they were due beyond all doubt to supernatural influence, why should it not obtain much more in the last crisis of the world's history, especially as all prophecy agrees in pointing to it as a miraculous interruption of long-continued apathy ? If the bright beams of civil and religious liberty flashed up at once as though by magic at the time of the Reformation out of the darkness of a thousand years : and if in spite of all the exultation in that light which is felt throughout the most civilized countries in the world, and which is almost consecrated in the institutions of this nation, it does not seem to have materially increased in brilliancy since it first startled Europe out of the long sleep of slavery and superstition, can we deem it aught strange or improbable that the final demolition of error should be reserved for another and a far greater though perhaps briefer crisis ? Such a crisis all prophecy leads us to expect : how soon or how long deferred it were presumptuous to enquire in the face of the declaration, that it is not for us to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power¹. But Scripture furnishes us with various criteria of its approach, which cer-

¹ Acts i. 7.

tainly seem to exist to some extent at the present moment. The scepticism which scoffs at the promise of Christ's appearing, because since the Fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were¹; the feverish and constantly accelerating rapidity of human intercourse; the astonishing diffusion of superficial knowledge; the almost extinction of the sense of loyalty in most civilized nations, or in other words, that complete loss of confidence in any one particular form of government, which acquiesces in whatever is, not because it approves, but because it despairs;—all these can hardly be considered other than so many symptoms of some great approaching crisis. And never surely was there a time to which the awful imagery employed by our Lord would more suitably apply than to the present. Distress of nations and perplexity,—the sea and the waves roaring with that fearful sound which too plainly portends the approach of the tempest whilsts as yet the air is unnaturally still,—men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking for those things which *shall* come to pass²,—when was this portentous, sickening, confused anxiety more generally felt than now?—But why, my brethren, why should *we* be anxious? we who *know* in whom we have believed: we who know whose hand controls the storm: we who in all time of our tribulation can take refuge in the bosom of that Almighty Parent of whom tribulation is our best remembrancer? we who are expressly told to exult in the midst of the general consternation, because that consternation tells us that

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 4.

² Luke xxi. 25, 26.

our Redemption draweth nigh¹ ? we who are assured that these sorrows are but the birth-throes of a new Creation in which dwelleth righteousness : of a new order of things in which the will of God shall be done in earth as it is done in heaven ? For this is the final end and aim of all the “changes and chances” which befall the race at large as well as the individual : this is the result which the very fact of our being directed to pray for it guarantees. For would the Son of God instruct us to petition for what never may be realized ? Would He who is Truth itself delude his followers into asking what never might be granted ?—If then we believe in Him who has bidden us when we pray to our heavenly Father to say not only “Thy kingdom come,” but also “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,” we must believe that our prayers are heard and accepted, and shall finally be accomplished : that a time will come when the kingdom of God shall be so established that his will shall be the law of this earth and of all its inhabitants, in the same way and in the same degree as it is now the law of all the denizens of heaven ! For recollect that the divine will may be a law to the universe in very different ways. In one sense all creatures here below are even now executing his will as much as the angelic hosts above. For who hath resisted, or who can resist, the will of the Omnipotent² ? Men may league themselves against his decrees, but their very opposition will fulfil them³. And this indeed seems to be the precise point at which the

¹ Luke xxi. 28.

² Rom. ix. 19.

³ Acts iv. 27, 28.

power of God becomes specifically different from the power of any other being ; He alone can create wills, and not mere machines : wills which are free to oppose and counteract, and yet in the very counteracting execute his purposes. How this can be—how the absolute supremacy which is essential to the very idea of God should be consistent with the freedom of man's will—is a mystery of natural religion as great as any for which revelation challenges belief: a mystery however from which there is no escaping except by running either into Atheism or fatalism. And the whole history of man is a series of examples of these apparently incompatible principles of divine absolutism and human freedom working out a joint result. In one sense therefore the will of God is always done in earth. But when we pray “Thy will be done in earth *as it is in heaven*,” we look forward to a state in which the will of God shall no longer be what this world's history exhibits it,—the awful dark resistless power which controls the unruly wills and raging passions of sinful men into the involuntary and unconscious executors of his decrees, and makes the very wrath of men to praise him,—but shall become the principle which animates and inspires every individual will : the very life-breath of every individual soul ! so that our whole nature being attuned to perfect harmony with it, and consequently endued with perfect power to accomplish it, it shall be the very instinct of our being to do that holy, that beneficent will in all things, at all times, in all places, without fatigue, without imperfection, without intermission ! Surely the doing

God's will in earth as it is done in heaven, from free spontaneous love, would of itself suffice to transform earth into heaven !

And yet, brethren, there is one consideration which may add to the splendours of this picture. It is impossible, I think, to avoid seeing an intended connexion between the address to God as "our Father which is *in heaven*," and the petition that "his will may be done in earth as it is *in heaven*." Heaven is here set before us as the model place where the voluntary performance of God's will ensures the highest blessedness, because there that will is the very life-blood of every finite will. When therefore we are told that *He is in heaven*, does it not almost imply that *He will be in earth hereafter in the same way in which he is now in heaven, so soon as his will shall be done in earth as it now is done in heaven*? That he will be present not merely by his invisible though ever active all-sustaining power, but by the visible disclosure of all his glories? That instead of beholding the Creator only in the creation, and reading in the works of his hands the attributes of the Artificer as we do now¹, we may then behold creation in its Creator; and see the wonders of his infinite creation and the greater wonders of that Providence which rules his infinite creation in the direct effulgence of his eternal Power and Godhead?

And these, my brethren, are not the mere reveries of an excited imagination; not the mere dreams of a mys-

¹ Rom. i. 20.

tical theology; the Word of God itself directly authorises these anticipations. For what other meaning can we attach to that wonderful passage¹ where describing the city of God, the new Jerusalem, the apostle says, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." What do these words mean save that all the knowledge of things, all the information we now derive by material light through the medium of the senses, we shall then derive immediately from Him of whom light is the fittest emblem, without the intervention of any created agency, without limit and without imperfection? That all our wants shall be supplied, all our desires satisfied, by the direct and immediate fruition of the Creator? And is not this the consummation to which St Paul alludes in that mysterious passage, where² he declares that when all enemies shall be subdued—when even death shall be destroyed,—then shall the Son deliver up the kingdom which will have then accomplished its every purpose, unto the Father; that from thenceforth, throughout all the infinite succession of created existence, all sin, all sorrow, all suffering being utterly extinct, God may be all in all!

With these anticipations of a glory ineffable, inconceivable, which shall then be fully revealed in us when the petitions we have now been considering shall be perfectly accomplished, O let us pray as we have never

¹ Rev. xxi. 23.

² 1 Cor. xv. 28.

prayed before, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name ! Thy kingdom come ! Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven !

NOTE A.

In some Churches we find, from the language of the Epistles, that there were church-officers ; e. g. in the Epistle to the Philippians, there is a greeting addressed to the saints, "with the bishops and deacons;" in other Epistles there is only incidental mention of such officers, as e. g. in those to the Romans, Colossians, and Hebrews: in others, as e. g. in those to the Corinthians, there is not a trace of any regular ministry; for it is obviously begging the question to assume that because the Sacraments were administered at Corinth, there was a Christian ministry, they being alone competent to administer the Sacraments; and this assumption is incapable of proof. Again, in the Epistle to the Romans we find the office of deaconess in the person of Phœbe at Cenchreæ; and such probably were the widows about whose choice St Paul gives such particular directions in the 5th chapter of his First Epistle to Timothy: and in the 4th chapter of Ephesians we find an enumeration of church-offices, some of them depending on immediate inspiration, and therefore now extinct, whilst others that now exist are not mentioned there.

NOTE B.

I cannot but think, with Olshausen, that the discourse in St John's 6th chapter was meant by our Saviour as an anticipatory instruction with regard to the nature of the spiritual blessings chiefly, if not solely, communicated in the Lord's Supper. The very symmetry of the Gospel seems to require this:

this Gospel being the only one in which the institution of neither Sacrament is mentioned, whilst the discourse with Nicodemus too plainly alludes to Baptism to be capable of any other interpretation. Probably no objection would have ever been made against this view but for the Romish attempt to prove out of this Chapter what it cannot prove—the really rationalistic doctrine of Transubstantiation. I call it rationalistic, because it is an attempt to explain, on the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy, the mystery of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. Luther's doctrine of Consubstantiation is evidently liable to the same objection. It is curious to observe how in this case also, extremes, the most distant apparently, coincide: for the Romish and the Zuinglian systems, however different, do yet coincide in attempting to clear up the mystery of the Eucharist; the former by explaining it, the latter by explaining it away, or denying it.

Note C.

I use the word “reception” purposely, implying the same limitation of meaning which our Catechism implies where it says that the inward part of the Lord’s Supper “is the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed” (not *given* but) “*taken and received* by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper:” thus implicitly protesting against the notion that any objective changes have taken place in the elements by the act of consecration.

Note D.

Hence the importance (where it can be done) of complying with the Rubric, which, with a correct feeling of the individuality of the application of the death of Christ, enjoins on the minister to say to each individual separately as he gives him the consecrated elements, “The Body—The Blood of Christ which was given—shed—for *thee*, preserve *thy* body and soul unto everlasting life.”

NOTE E.

The reasoning of this passage, and the conclusions arrived at in it, are so completely borne out by the authority of Hooker, that I cannot but quote his words, (*Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book vii. c. 14, § 11, Keble's edition.)

"Now, whereas hereupon some do infer, that no ordination can stand but only such as is made by bishops, which have had their ordination likewise by other bishops before them, till we come to the very apostles of Christ themselves; in which respect it was demanded of Beza at Poissie, 'By what authority he could administer the Holy Sacrament, being not thereunto ordained by any other than Calvin, or by such as to whom the power of ordination did not belong, according to the ancient orders and customs of the church; sith Calvin, and they who joined with him in that action, were no bishops:' and Athanasius maintaineth the fact of Macarius, a presbyter, which overthrew the holy table whereat one Ischyras would have ministered the blessed Sacrament, having not been consecrated thereunto by laying on of some bishop's hands, according to the ecclesiastical canons; as also Epiphanius inveigheth sharply against divers for doing the like, where they had not episcopal ordination: to this we answer, that there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordination made without a bishop.

"The whole Church visible, being the true original subject of all power¹, it hath not ordinarily allowed any other than bishops alone to ordain: howbeit, as the ordinary course is ordinarily in all things to be observed, so it may be in some cases not unnecessary that we decline from the ordinary ways.

"Men may be extraordinarily, yet allowably, two ways admitted unto spiritual functions in the Church. One is, when God himself doth of himself raise up any, whose labour he useth, without requiring that men should authorize them; but then he doth ratify their calling by manifest signs and tokens himself from heaven: and thus even such as believed not our

¹ i. e. that wherein all (ecclesiastical) power originally inheres.

Saviour's teaching, did yet acknowledge him a lawful teacher sent from God: 'Thou art a teacher sent from God, otherwise none could do those things which thou doest.' (John iii. 2.) Luther did but reasonably, therefore, in declaring, that the Senate of Mulhouse should do well to ask of Muncer, from whence he received power to teach, who it was that had called him; and if his answer were that God had given him his charge, then to require at his hands some evident sign thereof for men's satisfaction: because so God is wont, when he himself is the author of any extraordinary calling.

"Another extraordinary kind of vocation is, when the exigence of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the church, which otherwise we would willingly keep: when the church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath, nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give, place. And, therefore, we are not simply without exception, to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continual succession of bishops in every effectual ordination. These cases of inevitable necessity excepted, none may ordain but only bishops: by the imposition of their hands it is that the church of God giveth power of order, both unto presbyters and deacons."

I do not think that the quotation at length of this passage will be deemed superfluous, if it be considered that it occurs in a part of the Ecclesiastical Polity which is probably less read than others; and that Mr Keble, in quoting a small portion from it in his Preface, has thought proper to treat what he does quote as merely "an admission which after all we have seen may appear somewhat anomalous," (as doubtless it does, after the interpretation of Hooker's views which he has given, notwithstanding the two preliminary considerations with which he prepares the reader's mind for this "anomalous admission,") and not, as Hooker evidently intended it, as a carefully guarded warning against a too sweeping inference from the tenor of his former reasoning, (see the words with which he commences the section containing this "anomalous admission":) "Now whereas

hereupon some do infer," &c.) and a definite denial of what has been recently stated as the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession, ("And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination,") grounded on the fact, that sometimes "the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain." Now this fact, be it observed, assumes that *the Church may exist where there are no bishops*; and the conclusion from this fact at which Hooker arrives, in its turn assumes the all-important principle, from which indeed the whole argumentation proceeds, and which is most deliberately laid down by Hooker, that "*the whole Church visible is the true original subject of all power*," i.e. the true subject in which all ecclesiastical power (for it is only that which is in question) originally inheres, and therefore that all ecclesiastical power is not ultimately inherent, as has lately been assumed, in the bishops and those ordained by them. And agreeably to this Hooker speaks in the concluding words of the whole passage of "*the Church of God*," as "giving power of order by the imposition of the hands of bishops :" where it is plain that he, consistently with his whole reasoning, treats the Church, and not the bishops of the Church, as the ultimate source of the "power of order," in utter contradiction to the system of which Mr Keble has been one of the most influential supporters. I speak above of "what has recently been stated as the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession," because I wish to guard my readers against the supposition, that this doctrine only exists in the shape in which it has been recently so much insisted on; and in which shape, as will have been seen by the passage I have quoted from Hooker, it is expressly discarded by the profoundest reasoner on ecclesiastical polity this country hath ever yet produced.



SERMON IV.

ST MATTH. vi. 11.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

We have now, my brethren, arrived at a portion of the Lord's Prayer, which, unlike the preceding petition, offers no difficulties whose solution might be important for the settling of vexed questions of Theology. On the nature and essence of that kingdom for whose coming we are taught to pray in the second clause, there have been the greatest differences of opinion: nor can we wonder at this, since different passages of holy writ speak of it in very different ways; and Christians, instead of comparing them together and gathering from them their united result, have generally insisted with exclusive preference on those which favoured their own particular views; either explaining away or entirely disregarding those which opposed them. In contravention to this partial system of interpretation, I endeavoured, when I last addressed you, to shew that, as neither of these two sets of texts can be supposed to say anything that is false, so neither of them can be supposed to say *all* that is true: that they are each

of them the necessary complement of the other: and that the right way of interpreting them is not to separate them, and then take one set for our exclusive guide, neglecting or perverting the other, but to combine them into one joint and plenary authority. The light of divine truth, like the light of day, is composed of variously colored rays, and these rays may perhaps seem each individually more beautiful than their united product; but he only obtains its full illumination who unites these scattered tints, at whatever sacrifice of individual beauty, into one colorless transparent beam.

We now proceed to the second part of the Lord's Prayer, in which the soul of the petitioner descends from the contemplation of his wants, as their satisfaction is contained by implication in the furtherance of God's general designs, to contemplating them as they are more individually felt by himself. For every thing that is promotive of our happiness may be looked at in two different ways; either in reference to the divine purposes in general, or in reference to our individual wants in particular: and our Saviour displays his perfect knowledge of our nature, and his willingness to accommodate thereto, as in other things, so also in this, that he requires us not to confine our prayers to the petitioning that God's general purposes may be accomplished, (although these purposes do really comprise all our wants,) but authorizes us to seek directly the satisfaction of our individual necessities. The petitions "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," do in reality comprise all that follows, even as

they, in their turn, are really comprised in the opening clause “Hallowed be thy Name;” but though they really *imply*, they do not plainly *express* our wants. And therefore, in order that nothing may be lacking to the satisfaction of the suppliant, Jesus subjoins three petitions which palpably express his individual needs: thus sanctioning, by his own example, the precept of his Apostle, that in *every thing*, no matter how personal or trivial, our requests be made known to God by prayer and supplication¹: and exhibiting himself at the very outset of his ministry on earth, as fully qualified by his sympathy to act hereafter as our Advocate in heaven. To the first of these three petitions we confine our present attention.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Of the *meaning* of this petition there can be, as I before observed, but little doubt. As it stands in the English version, which is consecrated by constant use from the lispings of childhood at its mother’s knee to the last faint low murmurs of expiring age, it represents the intention of the original with sufficient accuracy, though the epithet translated “daily” might perhaps be more correctly rendered “for the following day²;” the sense being, “Give us this day bread that may suffice also for the next;” so that we may live not from hand to mouth, but relieved from the pressure of immediate anxiety. Nor

¹ Phil. iv. 6.

² According to what seems the most probable derivation of the word ἐπιούσιος—that from ἐπιών.

should I have noticed this unless to shew you, that a prudent forethought for the wants of immediate futurity is not opposed to the spirit of our religion, but in perfect unison therewith, since the prayer dictated by its founder expresses and consequently sanctions it. When therefore, in this same Sermon on the Mount, we are told not to take thought for the morrow¹, because the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself, we are not enjoined to be reckless about the future, but dissuaded from being anxious²: it is not improvidence, but reliance on God's care that is inculcated. The Saviour forbids our yielding to a lurking distrust about the morrow, as though our future well-being, or even our existence, depended altogether on the jealous accuracy of our present provision for its unforeseen contingencies, and not mainly on the good providence of our heavenly Father, who will not suffer those who trust in him to lack aught which may conduce to their real good. Improvidence and recklessness indeed, so far from being in any wise sanctioned, are frequently and explicitly condemned in Holy Writ: as arising not from faith but from presumption, and leading unto ruin. Need I quote the description of the sluggard in the book of Proverbs³, in which the poverty that comes upon him with the swiftness of a traveller, and the want that seizes him with the resistless murderous violence of an armed man, are attributed to the laziness which courts "a little

¹ Matt. vi. 34.

² The word *μερμηῶ* expresses anxious thought.

³ Prov. vi. 10, 11.

more sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," instead of bracing them to work: and where he is rebuked by the example of the ant¹, one of the smallest and most insignificant of insects, which, without "guide or overseer or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest?" This, and many other like passages in the sacred books, which eulogize a prudent industry, and declare improvident idleness to be nothing less than wilful and presumptuous sin, may convince us that all the censures on care for the morrow we meet with in the Sermon on the Mount, are to be understood as applying to such care only as would rely exclusively on its *own* right arm and hand, distrusting or denying the ever-watchful love of God. And viewed in connexion with these passages the prayer, "Give us this day bread that may suffice us for the next," at once sanctions a wise forethought, and forbids all anxious and therefore unbelieving care for the morrow: since, on the one hand, it cannot be wrong to labour for that for which we are authorized to pray, nor, on the other, can it be right so to labor as though God would not heed our prayers, and as though all depended on ourselves. He who offers up this prayer aright will be equally removed from the presumption that tempts the most High, by refusing to recognize the appointed instrumentality of human industry in the operation of his Almighty hands, and from the unbelief that will not recognize the operation of his hands at all.

¹ Prov. vi. 6.

Not to dwell further on this point, however, since it depends on the niceties of a rendering perhaps more correct indeed than the received translation, but not endeared by general knowledge and familiar use, I will take the petition as it stands in the authorized version of the Bible, and after briefly setting forth its meaning, proceed to make one or two remarks of practical application.

"Give us this day our daily bread." There is only one term in this short clause about which there can be the smallest doubt: the term *bread*. This word, as you must be aware, is very generally used in Scripture to denote food in general, rather than any one kind of food in particular. Bread being the staff of life, it was natural to apply the term to every thing that supports life. Hence to eat bread, in the Old Testament, is the established phrase for partaking of a meal. Joseph, when ordering food to be brought in says, "Set on bread." Ahab, when grieved because he could not get rightful possession of the vineyard of Naboth, refuses "to eat bread." The petition therefore, "give us this day our daily bread," cannot be taken as intended to express the merest and most absolute *necessaries* only in the way of food, that quantum of sustenance of the very simplest kind which may suffice to keep the frame alive: because in the Bible bread is equivalent to food in general, and not to any one kind of food in particular. On the other hand, if we substitute the word *food* in this petition for its equivalent, so as most accurately to represent to our minds the meaning it would at once present to those whom our Lord addressed, we perceive

that it does not go beyond the reasonable supply of wants measured by comfort, and not by luxury. God is indeed no harsh or grudging parent; nor would he cut down the expression of our needs any more than he stints their supply: the liberal bounty which “gives liberally to all men, and upbraideth not,” provided we enjoy what is given with a proper thankfulness, and therefore with due moderation, is in no respect opposed to the spirit of the prayer which his blessed Son, his best gift to men, teaches his followers to use: and when that Son calls himself “the bread of life¹,” he plainly shews us that the bread for which he authorizes us to pray, means all that is necessary to support life in all the fulness of the term; but on the other hand, it is equally plain, that while we are instructed to pray for every thing that may *support*, we are not authorized to pray for any thing that may *pamper*. Whatever is of *mere* enjoyment without contributing to our real needs, to our strength and health and efficiency, we cannot for a moment suppose to be included in “our daily bread.” And if this be true of things that minister to pleasure without contributing to profit, much more evidently does it apply to all such things as actually minister to pleasure only at the sacrifice of profit; which either pamper the body into disease, or enthrall the mind to sensuality. Imagine a man addicted to luxurious indulgence, habituated to all those contrivances by which human ingenuity has not been ashamed to give an artificial stimulus to senses jaded by excess—imagine, I say, such

¹ John vi. 35.

a man kneeling by his bedside when he rises from the late, heavy, unrefreshing slumbers of satiety, and with all the costly apparatus of epicurism awaiting him, in the anticipation of some new refinement, some new delicacy to tempt his palled appetite, asking God to "give him this day his daily bread!!" Who does not feel at once that such a prayer would be a mere mockery, or worse than mockery! Yet such a case is but the extreme of what one almost daily meets. For are not the great majority of mankind, even amongst those who earn their daily bread by daily toil, and have neither means nor leisure for luxurious dissipation—are not even such persons too generally excessive in their *desires*? Are we ourselves, my brethren, (and in speaking thus I am aware that I speak not to many rich, not to many whom the world calls dissipated), are we ourselves always content with the prophet Agur¹, to pray God to "give us neither poverty nor riches, but to feed us with food convenient for us," lest, if we were rich, we should be tempted to suppose that we could dispense with his care, and therefore to shake off all feeling of obligation and dependence; or, on the other hand, if we were sunk in excessive poverty, we should blaspheme him by questioning his goodness? And yet, my brethren, unless the prayer of Agur be the real spirit of our thoughts and of our efforts,—unless our industry be so exerted, on the one hand, as to provide against the pinching of poverty as far as possible, and on the other, our liberality to our poorer brethren and to the cause of God be such as seriously to

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.

check the too rapid increase of our wealth,—unless we thus aim at that middle state of competence which is neither poverty nor riches,—we cannot pray to our Father which is in heaven with any reality of intention or feeling of acceptance, that he would “give us each day our daily bread.”

We therefore see that this petition actually defines our legitimate desires and aims; and whilst telling us for what we ought to *pray*, does in effect tell us for what we ought to *toil*. Not for the satisfaction of those imaginary wants that are created by the mere usage of a corrupt society, which can with cool indifference survey the frightful spectacle of thousands famishing to death, but is outrageous if anything is diminished of its own extravagant display; not for those gorgeous trappings, that splendour of dress and table and equipage which mocks the misery, to whose support it is nevertheless forced by God's Providence most unwillingly to contribute; not for such worse than “pomps and vanities of this wicked world,” may the Christian either pray or toil: but for everything that may contribute to the real well-being of himself, and those dependent on him; for everything that may satisfy reasonable wants, without pampering unreasonable fancies and brutish appetites; for everything that may enable him to do the greatest amount of good in that station of life to which God's Providence, and not his own vaulting ambition, may have called him,—for all this he may lawfully labour, since all this is virtually embraced

in the petition in which he entreats his heavenly Father “to give him each day his daily bread.”

Nor is this all. Not merely does this petition define the lawful desires and aims of the Christian in respect of worldly goods, nor does it merely sanction industry applied to the attainment of these desires and aims, but it promises success to his endeavours, provided they are carried on in a spirit of dependence on his God. For when the Saviour himself teaches us how to pray to God, he in effect pledges himself that God will grant what we thus pray for. The very circumstance therefore that a prayer for daily food is prescribed, is a direct promise that daily food will be bestowed. The very circumstance that the support of our bodily life is as much a matter of prayer to God, as the hallowing his name, the coming of his kingdom, and the doing of his will, is an express declaration that God will provide for our bodily wants with as much care as he provides for the progress and development of the grand mystery of his universal government. And this lesson you will recollect is elsewhere inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount:—“Consider¹,” says the Saviour to his followers, “consider the fowls of the air, which neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. And how much better are not ye than they?” Beings endowed with no capacity of forethought—depending on what might seem to be the merest contingencies, were we not told that

¹ Matt. vi. 26.

God's Providence descends to the minutest thing that he has created¹—unable to approach their Creator with any conscious or intelligent worship, they are yet fed by Him; and surely no thought can be more wonderful than the reflection, how the whole enormous multitude of living things that crowd this earth, and rise by imperceptible gradations through the ranks of being, are so exactly balanced against each other and against the vegetable world by which they all are ultimately nourished, as that race does not extinguish race, but all preserve that exact proportion of numbers which is essential to their mutual preservation! And shall we who in the very passage in which the Saviour adduces God's care of the brute creation are with marked emphasis taught to regard the Being who is *their Creator* as “*our Father*,”—shall we whose value in the sight of God has been declared above all by what he hath done in order to make us his dear children,—shall we not look with confidence to “*our Father*” for the food which he knows to be necessary for us? If we, evil as we are, yet know how to give good gifts to our children²,—if there is none of us who would mock the hunger of his child by giving him a stone when he asked for a loaf,—shall we imagine our heavenly Father capable of looking on our wants with cold indifference? He that spared not his Son to save us, shall he not with him freely give us all things³? Surely, my brethren, it needs no other consideration than this to assure us that

¹ Matt. x. 29.

² Matt. vii. 9—11; Luke xi. 11—13.

³ Rom. viii. 32.

when we pray for the supply of our real wants, we shall certainly be heard. And yet the fact that God's own Son hath directed us to pray for those wants is an assurance even beyond what the consideration of God's universal Providence, or even of the Redemption he has wrought for man, can give; nor does any one passage in the whole compass of Holy Writ seem to me so fraught with comfort to the Christian under all the cares and anxieties of life, as the petition by commanding us to use which our Saviour has engaged God's honour, (if we may dare say so,) to "give us each day our daily bread."

If then, my brethren, the thought arises in our minds, How is it, if God's Providence extends to all—how is it that so many starve? if we are tempted to question God's Providential care of ourselves, and to urge our own distress as a proof that the prayer for daily food, though inculcated is not always granted, I would beseech any who may have entertained such thoughts, as probably many of you have, to reflect with regard to the mass of misery and destitution which exists in this world, that God's Providence is a scheme too large for our comprehension; that the greatest amount of happiness may, for aught we can possibly tell, result from this very misery which so appals us: and with regard to ourselves, and any individual reason we may have for doubting our heavenly Father's goodness, I would have every one ask himself very seriously, whether he have offered up the petition for daily bread as the Saviour directs it to be offered? Whether it have taken the same place in our mind which it occupies in

the Lord's Prayer? Whether the firstfruits of our desires have been given to the grand concerns of the immortal soul, and the happiness of the whole human race in the coming of God's kingdom, and whether our bodily wants have ever been considered as merely secondary and subservient to these grand spiritual interests¹? Whether too we have been praying for our daily bread not merely with our lips but with our lives, by conscientious and steady industry, and by avoiding all waste, according to the example set by Christ, when, after miraculously multiplying food, he directed his disciples to "gather up the very fragments that remained, that nothing might be lost"²? And whether if we have not been "not slothful in business," to provide daily bread, we have also testified by our deeds in endeavouring to promote God's kingdom, that we are "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord³?" Or whether we have not perhaps been equally indolent about both secular and spiritual objects; idly praying alike in both cases for what we never heartily exerted ourselves to bring about: as though God, who always works by means, were bound to help those who will not help themselves, to provide that those may eat who will not work⁴; and thus, in defiance of every known law of nature, of the evident purposes of human society, and of his expressly revealed will, to prolong by what would amount to nothing less than continued miraculous interference, an existence not merely worthless, but actually

¹ Compare Matt. vi. 33.

² John vi. 12.

³ Rom. xii. 11.

⁴ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

mischievous? These are questions which every one should very seriously put to himself, before he presumes on account of his own distress, to arraign God's Providence of neglect, and God's Son of untruth. And if we turn from any individual experience of our own to the collective experience of whole nations, do we not find that poverty and misery seem naturally to accompany irreligion and idleness? In what parts of the world are temporal distress and degradation most rife? Are they not those in which the darkness of heathenism, or the worse darkness of heathenized Christianity, has concealed the benign aspect of the God whom even nature discloses as our beneficent Creator, and whom Revelation displays to us as our loving Father? Where do we find want and distress so prevalent as in climes "where every landscape pleases, and only man is vile?" And can we imagine that this marked distribution of secular degradation precisely over those countries where spiritual degradation most prevails is accidental? Can we imagine it accidental that regions most blessed in their productiveness should be most cursed in the enjoyment of that productiveness? That plenty and poverty should walk hand in hand—fertility and starvation meet in strange and unnatural conjunction? And yet is not this the case? Look at India—look at Africa—look at Italy—look at Sicily, formerly the granary of the Roman commonwealth—Sicily, capable of feeding half Europe, and yet unable now to support a scanty population sunk in lethargy and superstition! Look at Spain, in one of whose provinces a thousand years

ago lived thrice or four times as many as are now thinly spread over the whole of that vast peninsula ! And why should I cite a more distressing example nearer home ?— What are all these instances but negative confirmations of the Lord's Prayer, clearly intimating that where God's name is not hallowed, where his kingdom is either not established, or worse, where it has been by violence repressed, there the wrath of God declares itself in the withholding of that “ convenient food,” which when given was not received with thankfulness, and conduced not to the glory of the all-bounteous Giver.

If then we wish to obtain an answer to what the form of expression intimates, should be our daily prayer for daily bread, let us take care to prefer this petition as it was intended ; in due subordination to more important interests, in all the simplicity of a mind bent not on acquiring wealth, but on avoiding want, and in harmony with the honest exertions of an industrious life. “ Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” according to both the precept of the Saviour and the example of his prayer, and we may be confident that whatever we have need of will be added to us. Thus we shall be enabled fully to comply with the injunction, “ Cast *all* your care upon the Lord,” and fully to realize the blessed assurance, “ for He careth for you¹. ”

Before, however, I conclude, I must advert to a very common though I think erroneous interpretation of this clause of the Lord's Prayer. It is the interpreting “ our

¹ 1 Pet. v. 7.

daily bread" to mean either generally the sustenance of our spiritual life by divine grace, or in particular that spiritual food which we receive in the Holy Sacrament. And in confirmation of this latter view some have translated the Greek word rendered in our version "daily" by the word "supersubstantial;" a word of which I do not profess to understand the meaning. Now both of these views seem to me undue refinements on the plain words of the petition, and arise, I fear, from an undue depreciation of the body and its wants. Did we hold with certain heathen philosophers that the body is a mere incumbrance on the spirit, so that the great superiority of our state after death consists chiefly in the spirit's being no longer thus imprisoned within the body, we might have some reason to conceive the care of the body and the supply of its wants too mean a subject for our prayers. Though even in that case, since without the wants of the body being supplied it is plain we cannot do anything in the world to promote God's kingdom and the happiness of our fellow-men, it could hardly be deemed improper to allude to what must ever be felt to be the necessities of our present condition. Not unless we adopted the notion of those ancient heretics the Nicolaitans, who are mentioned by the Son of God with the utmost abhorrence in his Epistles to the seven Asiatic Churches¹, and imagined that the body was not created by the same being who created the soul, but by a malignant dæmon, so as to be radically bad, the seat of vice, in fact a mere

¹ Rev. ii. 6, 15.

monstrous deformity in God's kingdom,—not unless we adopted this wild notion could we reasonably infer that the care of the body was beneath us, and much more beneath the heavenly Father to whom we pray day by day for daily bread.

And surely when all the rest of the Lord's Prayer is occupied by the wants of the soul, we cannot deem one clause too much for the wants of the body. It therefore seems to me extremely ill-judged to divert this petition from its natural and unforced meaning, so as to take it in a merely spiritual sense, because it then becomes a tautologous repetition of the clauses in which we pray for that *positive* righteousness which is involved in the coming of God's kingdom *within* us as well as around us, and for that *negative* righteousness which we obtain when our trespasses are forgiven us; whilst on the other hand the Lord's Prayer then loses its fulness of application to that whole being, *body* as well as soul and spirit, for which the Apostle Paul disdained not to intercede¹. Hence I reject this view as rendering the Lord's Prayer at once tautologous and incomplete. But whilst I reject it from being the correct interpretation, I would not reject it as a mere secondary and permissible adaptation. Provided we recollect that the first proper intended sense of the petition for our daily bread refers to the wants of our corporeal frame, food, raiment, and shelter, (for these two last, though not named, are clearly implied in principle,) we may without any impropriety further spiritual-

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23.

ize it into a petition for that meat which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life. And as it is impossible acceptably to pray for the necessities of the body unless we have first sought the higher interests of the soul, so we may confidently say that it is impossible to pray as we ought for the meat which sustains the body if we do not eagerly embrace every opportunity of receiving that meat which sustains the soul. This divine food is given especially in that ordinance we this day solemnize. As often as it is solemnized we are invited to eat that "flesh which is meat indeed," and to drink "that blood which is drink indeed¹"; and are afresh reminded of Him who declares with the utmost solemnity of emphasis, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you²"; and who in the same night that he was betrayed, having loved his own before, shewed that he loved them even to the end³, by using his last moments for instituting the means by which throughout all ages they may become "partakers of his most blessed body and blood;" when "he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave unto them, saying, Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you: This do in remembrance of me⁴." If then we hope to be heard by our heavenly Father when we pray to him in the words his Son hath taught us for the bread that sustains the body during this life, Oh, let us never turn away from the Table where the Saviour gives us the bread that preserves both

¹ John vi. 55.

² John vi. 53.

³ John xiii. 1.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24.

soul and body to everlasting life ! And if only in his name can we obtain anything we ask of God, because only in him does God become "our Father," how can we venture to use the prayer he teaches unless we practise in memory of its Author that which he so solemnly ordains !

One word more. By consecrating bread and wine to be the symbols of his most blessed body and blood, and by making the receiving these symbols in faith the vehicle by which we receive that body and blood to our salvation, the Saviour has ennobled the food which supplies our merely animal requirements, and the act by which we prolong our earthly life. Those who eat of that bread and drink of that cup must be more or less reminded of their Saviour as often as they eat the common bread of daily life : and the constant recollection that the food of the body has been made the emblem of the Incarnate Deity,—that eating and drinking has been consecrated to the highest act of Christian worship,—this recollection continually renewed in those who habitually obey their Lord's commands, will do away with every grossness in the satisfying of mere bodily wants, will invest with a spiritual meaning what otherwise might be a mere sensual enjoyment, and will preserve from all excess. And thus we may truly say that they, and they alone, who eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord in the worthiness of true repentance and humble earnest faith, can with the full sense of its propriety, and therefore with the full assurance of being heard, put up the prayer, " Give us this day our daily bread."



S E R M O N V.

ST. MATTH. vi 12.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

We have now, my brethren, arrived at that part of the Lord's Prayer which those who pray with real earnestness probably feel to be the most serious of all. However extensive and magnificent the vista of thought disclosed by the preceding clauses of this prayer, or however immediately connected with the universal necessities of daily life, they nevertheless lack the peculiar interest which attaches to the one we now propose considering. The universal hallowing of God's name, the universal diffusion and full development of his kingdom, so that his will shall be done by all in earth as it is now done by all in heaven, are glorious ideas: but however the mind may soar in contemplating them, it is soon twitched down again by a consciousness of internal evil which changes general interest into a more absorbing individual anxiety. We are not commanded to love others better than ourselves: so long therefore as we are not assured of our own safety, we cannot afford much sympathy to others' welfare. What shall it profit us if

we gain the cause of the whole world by our pleadings, and yet lose that of our own soul?

It is indeed true that the cause of individuals is to a certain extent,—God only knows to *what* extent,—bound up with the cause of the world at large. God's name cannot be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done in all its fulness, without ensuring the future happiness of the whole then existing race of man. But the very splendour of these anticipations of the *future* suggests fearful misgivings about the *present*. To pray that God's will may be done, implies that God's will is not being actually done ; and the not doing God's will, what is this but the very essence of sin and misery ? And this consideration presses on the conscience of every individual petitioner with individual and most crushing weight. I, I, am one of those who at this moment are not fulfilling God's will completely as it ought to be fulfilled ; and what then is to become of me ? It little imports that a new state of things is promised and expected—a new heaven and earth in which dwelleth righteousness, and every denizen of which shall thoroughly agree with and perfectly accomplish the will of his Creator : what is meanwhile to become of me and of all those countless multitudes who have been filling up the ages that elapsed before with heaps upon heaps of multifarious sin ? This is the question that forces itself upon the mind when it tries to interest itself in the glory that shall be revealed ; and which, if I may judge of others by myself, often makes us impatient at the amount of prayer devoted to

the cause of future and general blessings, when our own present and individual concerns are so much more pressing ; in keeping the vineyard of others we feel as though we were neglecting to keep our own.

Hence nothing can be more suitable to the place it occupies than the petition, " Forgive us our debts." Here we have at once the *expression*, and in the expression the *solution* of all those anxieties we cannot help at all times feeling more or less, and which the first portion of the Lord's Prayer is particularly calculated to excite. And how beautifully does the sequence of these petitions, in which there is indeed no vain repetition, sketch out the whole truth of our state with regard to sin and holiness ! In the former clauses we struck at the root of the poison-tree of sin : in the clause now before us we seek an antidote against the fruits that tree will continue to bring forth until it be completely eradicated. In the former clauses we aim at the total destruction of the corrupt nature : in the present clause, we have a remedy against the evils that nature will never cease to cause till it be totally destroyed. Neither of these portions of the Lord's Prayer can therefore be thoroughly understood without the other : and as, in examining the previous petitions, I did not so much dwell on the corruption they assume as on the means by which it shall be finally removed, it may not be unprofitable now, in speaking of the forgiveness of our debts or trespasses, to examine that general corruption of which our trespasses are individual outbreaks ; after which we shall better be

able to understand both the nature of those trespasses and the grounds on which we may expect that they will be forgiven.

I. That a certain general corruption exists in human nature is a proposition which scripture explicitly affirms, and which reason unaided by scripture must assume if it would understand the actual phenomena of life. The existence of an internal witness which checks us for acting wrong, will hardly be denied. Now it might be a subject of curious speculation whether in case we never acted wrong at all we should be at all aware of the existence of this monitor: whether conscience does not require being *violated* in order to be *felt*: just as when the internal parts of the body are in perfect health we are not conscious of their existence. At all events, conscience would not be so much felt as it now is, nor should we be so often reminded of its existence, but for our so often acting against its dictates. The very prominence of its activity becomes therefore a measure of the extent to which that activity is required. And so much more frequently does conscience condemn than approve, that the voice of conscience has in common parlance become synonymous with the sense of guilt and the stings of remorse. Now a fact like this deserves no small consideration; for the general language expresses the general feeling of mankind; and we are therefore forced by the most unsuspecting of all testimony—the testimony of common phraseology, which neither philosophy can warp nor interest bribe—to conclude that the sense of guilt preponderates over the sense

of innocence in the human breast. And if anything be wanted to corroborate this conclusion, the history of our race will abundantly supply it. To what but to the predominating sense of guilt are we to ascribe the fact that in all merely heathen countries the Deity is worshipped—if he be worshipped at all—with rites indicative of terror? And if it be urged in reply that this terror rests on unworthy representations of the Supreme, I would ask, whence came these unworthy representations? and to what are we to attribute their being universally accepted? It is nonsense to talk about priestcraft originating and disseminating them, as if that were a sufficient answer to this question: those who talk thus forget to explain how they ever came into the minds of the priests themselves; and how it was that mankind almost universally chose to listen to their priests instead of listening to their reason, if their reason spoke a different language from their priests. No! my brethren, priestcraft will not account for that terror of the Deity which men naturally feel and universally exhibit; and what stronger proof that we are at enmity with Him could we have than is given by this terror? Or is it a token of innocence that we are all naturally disposed to regard the Author of every good, the Being whose very essence, we are told, is love, not with love, but fear? And is not this the case? Is not the originally dominant sensation of every mind, when the reality of God's existence first dawns upon it, a sense not of attraction but of aversion? What makes us shrink from death, what crowns him king of

terrors, but the thought that he ushers us into the immediate presence of our God ?

But this is not all. The dread and aversion generally felt towards God is not merely a *symptom* of conscious guilt ; it is in itself the very deepest of all guilt.—It is well said by St John that every one that hateth his brother is a murderer¹: for murder is but hatred developed into action. For hatred is not a transient passion—a momentary flash like anger, to which men may be easily provoked even against the being they love best, and which may be easily removed by punishing its object for the offence which has provoked it : but a calm, steady, rooted aversion ; which aims, not at the *punishment*, but at the *destruction* of its object. Now, however shocking it be to say it, it is nevertheless true, that the aversion with which man naturally contemplates the Divine Being, when he views him as an actually existing person, and does not merely bandy about the name of God as a symbol for certain attributes, is precisely of this character. We do not indeed aim at destroying God ; but neither do we actually attempt to destroy every human being whom we hate. It may be impossible, or it may be dangerous to do so. But in both cases alike we should be well content if the object of our aversion did not exist. And as the next best substitute for their non-existence, we try to forget that they exist.—I have done a man some grievous wrong: I have not honesty enough to confess my guilt to the injured party, and to beg his pardon ; and

¹ 1 John iii. 15.

whenever he recurs to my mind I am therefore gnawn not so much by remorse as by loss of self-esteem ; and I begin to *hate* him. In order to remove these uneasy sensations I try to *forget* him.—Now this is an exact picture of the state of the case between us and God by nature. We feel that we have done wrong in his sight : we have not grace enough to be truly penitent and to confess ; we love the sin of which we are guilty, because it is pleasurable, and we try to persuade ourselves that God is dealing unjustly in forbidding what is so agreeable, and to get up a factitious anger against him for doing so¹: and as we cannot perfectly succeed in this, because conscience will not be bribed into acquiescence, we begin to *hate*, and try therefore to *forget*, God. Does this picture seem overcharged ? I challenge those amongst you who have scanned the dark mysteries of their own hearts to say whether there be not at times, aye even to the Christian, something almost intolerable in the idea that “God is behind and before us² :” that there is no place “whither we can go from his spirit”—no refuge “whither we can escape from his presence !” And is not this guilt ? Is not the hatred that would fain forget him whom it cannot annihilate, the very darkest shade of guilt ? How does the Psalmist describe those who have reached the very acme of wickedness, and who shall therefore be turned into hell, but as “they that forget God³ ?”

I have not appealed, as you will have noticed, to the

¹ See Note A at end of Sermon.

² Ps. cxxxix. 5.

³ Ps. ix. 17.

numberless crimes that sully the record of man's history, in support of the position that our very nature is corrupt: because the crimes themselves are unimportant in comparison with the state of mind from whence they spring. Murders, adulteries, thefts, perjuries, and all the rest of the foul catalogue, proceed in all cases alike out of the heart; and in order to proceed therefrom they must in all cases previously exist therein. It may be that comparatively few become enormous sinners in external act, because few have the requisite temptations and opportunities; but the germ of every sin does not the less exist because in most cases it continues undeveloped. The slightest internal movement of any sinful passion betokens the existence of that germ, though it may never shoot into the rank growth it attains in great criminals. The slightest wish for any thing that is our neighbour's—the slightest movement of impure desire—the slightest feeling of ill will,—are but the undeveloped germs of theft, of adultery, and of murder. Or have we so blunt a moral sense as to fancy ourselves spotless because we do not go all lengths and brave all dangers for the gratification of our secret inclinations? because we shrink from *doing* what we revel in *imagining*? These considerations then,—the aversion with which men naturally and spontaneously contemplate the God who is their greatest Benefactor, and which induces them either to cringe before him in slavish fear or to forget him in reckless defiance—the existence in *all* of desires and passions which are only restrained from breaking forth in destructive fury by the

necessary check put on men's actions by the laws of the land and the opinion of society,—these considerations, quite apart from Revelation, must force us to admit our natural depravity. But what is the origin of this depravity? and wherein does it consist? Reason can give no answer whatever to the first of these questions; nor to the second, in so far as it depends upon the first. Here therefore we must abandon the guide which has led thus far, and betake ourselves to that authority which alone can reveal to us these mysteries of our being. And here again let me warn you against an error too common amongst those who take special pride in being particularly exempt from error: the error committed by those *rational* Christians (as they call themselves in modest contradistinction from all others) who receive the Bible as a revelation given by God, and yet quarrel with every thing it reveals beyond what reason could discover: as though the Almighty would interfere with the usual course of the world by the most stupendous miracles, for no other purpose than to tell mankind what they knew very well, or might have known, before. If there be such a thing as a revelation at all, we are bound to expect that it will disclose things which mere unaided reason could not discover: let us then beware of the absurdity of questioning its statements because they actually fulfil this expectation!

Turning then to the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the 12th and following verses, we find a parallel drawn between two acts respectively performed by

the two most important persons in the history of our race. "By one man," says the apostle, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Or, putting this statement into other words—a process which is often useful to arouse us to the *sense* of what is too familiar in the *sound*—Adam introduced sin into the world by his deliberate and wilful violation of God's express command; which introduction of sin brought death along with it; and in consequence of this act of Adam, *death became universal, because sin became universal*. Retaining these two distinct statements in our minds, let us follow the apostle through his exposition of the nature of the connection between Adam's sin and our present state. This connection does not consist merely in our following or imitating Adam's sin¹, and therefore incurring like punishment: for this very idea is expressly guarded against by the apostle when he further says, that "until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law: nevertheless, death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." The reasoning of which passage may be thus paraphrased: No one could imitate Adam's sin unless by violating a divine precept of the authority of which he was as fully aware as Adam was of the authority of the precept which he violated. When, therefore, there was as yet no positive law, whilst men were still left to the imperfect guidance

¹ See Article IX.

of a conscience rude and ignorant, undeveloped by reason and uninstructed by revelation, it was impossible for them to sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression : yet, notwithstanding this, death, as we know, reigned over the whole human race long previous to that time when God first positively revealed his moral will, even over those to whom their sins were not imputed because they were committed in partial if not total ignorance of that will. And here let us pause, and separately contemplate the several truths contained in this most remarkable and most instructive passage. First then we are taught that there is a great and essential difference between the sin of Adam and the sins committed by that immense majority of the human race who have never enjoyed the benefit of a positive revelation of God's will ; that the fall was therefore not, as some have supposed, and as we often hear reasserted in various quarters now, a mere first case of what is repeated in the life of every individual ; because then there would be not one individual that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. In the second place, we are taught that sin, of some kind or other, is absolutely universal—that not one human being dies that has not sinned : if death passes upon all, it is because *all* have sinned¹. Thirdly, we are taught that this its universality is a consequence of Adam's sin : and fourthly, we are taught to consider death in two different lights : always as the necessary *consequence* of sin, but not always as its *punishment* : since it passes even upon

¹ See Note B at end of Sermon.

those to whom by God's mercy their sin is not imputed, and who are, therefore, not, strictly speaking, *punished* when they are visited with death¹. Without stopping to discuss the questions that might arise from this last head, we cannot but infer that a state of sinfulness introduced into the world by Adam's sin, and which, therefore, we must conclude would not have existed but for being thus introduced, a state too extending over the whole race without one exception, and that by no means merely in the way of imitation,—that such a state, thus depending on and conditioned by Adam's sin, must have been inherited by natural descent from Adam. This passage alone, therefore, without any support from incidental expressions in the poetic books of the Old Testament, this single passage of plain dogmatic teaching on the subject, suffices to prove that our nature suffers from an hereditary taint of sin. And why should we doubt this on any grounds of reason, when we have the most striking analogies of it in the transmission by natural descent of disease not merely bodily but mental: and when not a single argument can be urged against the transmission of sinfulness and death, from Adam to his posterity, which would not be equally valid against what we daily see—the transmission of disease and insanity from parents to their offspring? If it be inconsistent with God's justice to allow the transmission of sin by natural descent, it must also be inconsistent with his justice to allow the transmission of disease by natural descent. It is no answer to this to say that the cases are of very different importance, that here-

¹ See Note C at end of Sermon.

ditary disease is a mere trifle in comparison with hereditary sin, unless we are prepared to apply to the Almighty that code of morals on which we too often act ourselves, and suppose it consistent with his perfections to do a little wrong, but not a great. I almost shrink from enouncing the blasphemy: but it is necessary to expose the impious absurdities in which we are involved by denying the Scripture doctrine of inherited sinfulness, on the ground of its being incompatible with our feeble and inadequate conception of the attributes of Him whom men have dared in this our day to think they could find out by searching, yea even to perfection¹.

We have now seen the *origin* of our sinfulness in Adam's sin, and have from the Apostle's reasonings deduced further that this sinfulness is not an imitation of Adam's sin only, but an hereditary taint in our nature, affecting even those who have never had the opportunity of imitating Adam's sin: we have found that in all that come into the world the Apostle declares it leads to actual sin, though the degrees of guilt may be infinitely various according to the degrees to which the intellectual powers may be exalted and informed: and we have further received the comforting assurance that sin, though universally accompanied by death, is yet not imputed in its guilt where there is no law, either from none having been given, as in the case of some heathen, or from none being known, as in the case of infants. Having thus seen what we owe to Adam, let us follow the Apostle

¹ Job xi. 7.

through the remainder of this passage, in order to see what we owe to Christ. And here I must beg your attention to the passage as I shall read it out, because it contains some changes in the rendering which are absolutely necessary to enable us to grasp the Apostle's meaning. (v. 15.) "But not as the offence, so also the free gift. For if by the offence of the one the many, (*i. e.* the whole human race) died, much more the grace of God, and the gift in grace, the grace I mean of the one man Jesus Christ, abounded to the many. And not as by one that sinned, is the free gift : for the judgment is from one man to condemnation : but the free gift is from many offences unto reparation. For if by the offence of the one man death reigned by the one, much more shall they who are continually receiving the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by one (act of) transgression there came that upon all men which leads to condemnation, so by one (act of) reparation there came that upon all men which leads to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous¹."

Here then the Apostle exhibits in the clearest manner the correspondence between two acts—an act of transgression, and an act of reparation—the one perpetrated by Adam, the other performed by Christ. These two acts he contrasts with each other particularly as

¹ See Note D at end of Sermon.

regards their *respective effects* on the destinies of the human race. And here it is above all things important to the proper understanding of the passage, to observe that *these effects* the Apostle makes exactly to correspond with each other in point of *generality* or *individuality*. Whatever is universal in the effects produced by Adam's transgression, is also universal in the effects produced by Christ's reparation. Whatever is universal in the disease, is also universal in the remedy. On the other hand, whatever is partial in the disease is likewise partial in the remedy. Thus, the whole race of man being tainted with hereditary sin by natural descent from Adam, the whole race of man receive full remission of that hereditary sinfulness in Christ. "Christ," that is to say, "is the propitiation not for our sins only," who knowingly believe in him, "but also for the sins of the whole world¹." *Not a single individual in the family of man is consigned to eternal perdition by necessary consequence of his being sprung from Adam.* Not a single individual of our race *must* perish because he *inherits* a corrupt nature. Salvation, in so far as it consists in a removal of the guilt of his inherited corruption, extends to every human creature. But on the other hand, what is partial in the disease is also partial in the remedy. As there is a wide difference between that sinfulness which is common to all, by virtue of their common descent, and which attaches alike to the most determinately vicious, and the most endeavouringly righteous,—as there is a wide difference between this com-

¹ 1 John ii. 2.

mon and general sinfulness, and those wilful and deliberate transgressions which result from a deliberate yielding to the worse nature we have inherited ; so is there a wide difference between that remission which extends to all merely *inherited* sinfulness, and that favour which is given to those who deliberately yield to that better nature which Christ has introduced into mankind. The acts of Adam and of Christ extend respectively to every individual of our race : every human being has a sinful nature, by natural descent from Adam, the first transgressor, the whole *necessary* effects of which are neutralized and made good by Christ's atonement : but further than this the *general* effects of the reparation made by Christ do not extend. If we knowingly and wilfully choose rather to comply with the sinful nature we have inherited from Adam, than with the new nature introduced by Christ ; if we choose rather to connect ourselves with Adam's sin than with Christ's reparation, we cannot complain if that reparation be finally lost to us. If we choose in this world rather to walk in darkness than in that "light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world¹," we cannot marvel if in the world to come we are driven from the presence of God into the outer darkness in which dwell "they that forget God." And indeed does not the very fact that Christ has made a reparation for Adam's sin, and all those consequences thereof which are either involuntary or are repented of,—does not this very fact exclude from mercy all who slight that reparation by

¹ John i. 9.

making the similitude of Adam's sin their own voluntary choice? Does not the very fact that "light has come into the world" condemn those "who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil¹," and because they are determined not to recognise their being so? Accordingly St Paul, while he asserts that "as in Adam all (naturally) die, even so shall all in Christ be (naturally) made alive²;" that all *i.e.* shall receive in Christ that immortality which they had forfeited in Adam: so he, on the other hand, restricts the prospect of a *happy* immortality to those who instead of indulging the corrupt nature transmitted from the first, yield to the better nature imparted by the second Adam. They, and they only, who are "continually receiving the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord³." And this, indeed, we might infer from the Apostle's other reasoning, even were it not directly stated. For as in the case of death we are told that though it is the consequence of *general* corruption, it yet passes upon all men on account of their *individual* sin, so in the case of life, taken in the sense of eternal happiness, we are warranted to infer that it passes upon men because of their *individual* righteousness, though that righteousness is completely and entirely derived from Christ, with this difference only, that death is but "the wages," the mere desert and necessary consequence of sin; whilst life is "the gift of God,"

¹ John iii. 19.

² 1 Cor. xv. 22.

³ Rom. v. 17.

which no desert of ours could ever attain unto¹. As therefore only they are lost who give themselves up of set purpose to follow Adam's sin, so only they are saved who give themselves up of set purpose to follow Christ's righteousness, throughout all the various degrees of ignorance and enlightenment. For all the numberless individual cases of the family of man are comprised under the two great heads of that family; all are following the respective leadership of Adam or of Christ, whether they know them by name or not. And as Adam's sin is not *imputed* to his posterity, in so far at least as its consequences are concerned (for if all die it is because all have sinned), so must Christ's righteousness not be merely imputed to his followers as far as its consequences for them are concerned²; in every one of us Christ's death to sin must be repeated, if Christ's life to God is to be ours. In other words, the change produced by Christ's reparation is as real and actual as the change produced by Adam's transgression: it is a change not merely of *consideration*, but of *essence*; not merely of principle but of nature. In Christ we are not merely *considered* righteous, but *made* so; we are not merely *considered* God's children, but *made* so; we are not merely furnished with new *motives*, but with new *powers*. Christ was no mere "teacher sent from God³;" his work was beyond and independent of his teaching: and hence when Nicodemus addressed him merely as a teacher, the Saviour at once commenced his

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

² See Note E at end of the Sermon.

³ See Note F.

reply with a declaration intended to shew that there was a change to be produced such as no mere teaching could effect: a declaration the importance of which we may judge of by the solemnity of the asseveration, “Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man be born again¹ he cannot see the kingdom of God².”

II. Let us briefly examine the nature of that change which the Saviour in this passage calls a new birth, and St Paul a new creation³. Imperfect our examination of it must necessarily be; yet *three* things we may at once see are included in it. In our natural state we suffer especially from three defects: from want of *knowledge*, want of *will*, and want of *power*, to do what is right.

1. To commence with the most important. That our will is by nature estranged from God is too evident. All that I have said before on the subject of the alienation of our affections from him bears directly upon this point: for the affections are so closely connected with the will, that for all practical purposes they may be considered as identical. If our affections therefore be estranged from God, our will must be so too: and if our will be estranged from the fountain of all goodness, it must be likewise estranged from all the goodness of which he is the fountain. Now of this fact we see the plainest indications in the reluctance with which we engage in any work that involves the loving our neighbour—not *more*, but as *much* as ourselves. How visionary and impractical

¹ Or, from above.

² John iii. 2, 3.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

cable, if we would but confess our real feelings, does the command to do so generally appear to us ! How far too sweeping the Apostolic precept, to do good unto *all men*¹ ! Nothing indeed is easier, nothing is more delightful than to *talk* of loving our fellow-creatures, of considering all mankind as brethren, and so forth ; this is an age of sentimental effusion ; but when it comes to acting out that love, how different our deeds from our professions ! The active energetic *will* is wanting ; and the indolent theoretic approbation of goodness which wants the will to carry it into effect is as different from genuine love as a corpse is from a living body. Now as it is *deeds*, not *words*, to which God looks ; as it is deeds, not words, by which we shall be acquitted or condemned at the last day, the will that causes the deed is of the utmost importance. Governing as it does our whole complex being ; the seat of accountability, the distinguishing attribute which raises us from things to persons, the will must first of all be changed, or our case is completely hopeless. Accordingly it is upon the change of the will that the greatest stress is laid, and the most comforting assurances are given in Holy Writ. When the glory that shall be revealed in us presents itself to the Psalmist's mind in its highest form and evokes his loftiest strains, the very first symptom he adduces of it is, that in that day of the Messiah's power his people shall be *all willingness* to undertake his service² ; that their whole will shall be enlisted in his cause, so that the obedience they yield shall be both thoroughly

¹ Gal. vi. 10.

² Ps. cx. 3.

complete and thoroughly spontaneous. When David in his deepest penitence implores God not finally to cast him off, before all other things he beseeches him to "create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him¹:" to purify and renew the affections which had gone astray, and the will which had been partially if not entirely lost. When our Lord would describe that state of mind which must be habitual in a successful enquirer after truth, he says, "He that is willing to do the will of my Father which is in heaven," he, i.e. whose will coincides with the will of God in so far as he knows and understands it, "*he* shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God²." And how impossible this is to the natural man, we may learn from the words of St Paul, when speaking of the deterioration of man's intellect, he traces it up to the general corruption of the will, in the words (Rom. i. 28), "And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, so God gave them up to a reprobate mind," so that, as he had before said, their very understanding was affected, and "their foolish heart was darkened: and professing to be wise, they became fools." And the same truth is taught in that remarkable passage in which the Psalmist, with such wonderful psychological accuracy, traces up to the corruption of the heart the very extremest and worst error of the understanding: attributing the hallucination which denies the existence of that Being, whose existence universal nature testifies, and universal conscience proclaims, to the estranged affections and perverted will of

¹ Ps. li. 10.

² John vii. 17.

the miserable “fool, who hath said in his *heart*,” not in his intellect, “There is no God¹.”

2. But a change of little less importance must likewise be effected in our *knowledge*.

It must be evident to all thinking persons that we are very often in the dark about right and wrong. On the great principles of morality there is indeed no longer much dispute; though it may be well for us to be reminded that what we deem the plainest and most elementary of these principles were often subjects of doubt and disagreement among the most eminent of those who had not the light of Revelation. But general principles, however clearly ascertained, are often by no means easy to apply to particular cases; in doing this, though “reasoning at every step he treads, man yet too oft mistakes his way.” And if this obtains of them in so far as they are to guard us against *doing evil*, much more does it obtain of them in so far as they are to guard us against *leaving undone what is good*. Yet to do both equally belongs to the domain of moral science. Its duty is as much to teach us what we *ought*, as what we ought *not* to do. But how much more difficult the former than the latter! If the utmost care and reflection will not always save us from sins of *commission*, how much less will it generally save us from sins of *omission*! Yet this latter class, as it is infinitely the more numerous, so is it also infinitely the most important. It is not so much the evil men do, as the good they do not do, which checks the progress of

¹ Ps. xiv. 1, and liii. 1.

God's kingdom, and delays the happiness of the world. It is the apathy of benevolence rather than the activity of malevolence that works the widest ruin. Hell is paved not so much with evil deeds as with good intentions. And this conception of the superior danger and mischief of those sins which men too generally hardly consider sin at all, is remarkably sanctioned by our Lord himself. For what crime is the wicked servant cast into outer darkness? not for dishonesty, but for unprofitableness: not for squandering the talent or the pound entrusted to him, but for not increasing it¹. For what misdeeds are they that stand at the left hand of the Judge commanded to depart into everlasting fire, prepared originally not for the race of man, but for the devil and his angels? Not for injuries inflicted, but for kindnesses omitted: not because they have wronged Christ's followers, but because they have not benefitted them². For what are men cast into that prison out of which there is no release until they have paid the very uttermost farthing? Not for trespasses, but debts³. And hence it is for the forgiveness of our debts that the Saviour especially directs us to implore our heavenly Father in that recension of his prayer which St Matthew has preserved.

How different is all this from the world's estimate of sins! How different even from that which the gene-

¹ Matt. xxv. 24, and following, and Luke xix. 20, and following.

² Matt. xxv. 41, and following.

³ Matt. v. 26, and Luke xii. 58.

rality of Christians are disposed to entertain ! Alas ! my brethren, those acts of daring and outrageous rebellion against God to which men usually restrict the name of sins are but the smallest portion of the weight that sinks men's souls into perdition. How otherwise indeed should the narrow path be so very narrow, and the strait gate so very strait, that but few there be that find it¹ ! Would this awful language be *true* were the general estimate of sin not a fearfully underrating one ? And whose word shall we take upon a subject of such importance—the word of sinful men, or the word of the incarnate God ? Now it is precisely on the subject of the most numerous, the most influential, and, as we see from these declarations of the Redeemer, the most *fatal* class of sins—sins of omission—that nature leaves us almost in the dark. We know generally pretty well what it is our duty to *avoid*: we hardly know what it is our duty to *perform*. And whilst thus ignorant, every moment of time, every farthing of money, *wasted*, is continually swelling the vast aggregate of these debts for which we all need most humbly to implore remission. Do not delude yourselves into imagining that our duties are limited to those things the performance of which too generally lulls asleep the conscience. To give some petty fraction of our income in charity; to put a sixpence on the plate when we attend the sacrament; to enrol our names in those subscription lists which save us from the mortification of doing good by stealth,—do we fancy that such trifles as these dis-

¹ Matt. vii. 13.

charge our liabilities? All our time, all our talents, all our health and wealth, ought to be devoted to effecting the greatest possible amount of good which the most systematic arrangement could bring within their scope: and in attempting to carry out this consecration of our whole being to our Master's service, how liable to error should we not be! Here then we have signal traces of our natural corruption: we find that it has darkened our understanding as well as depraved our will: since else we should doubtless have been guided on all occasions by an unerring feeling of what was best, and have found our very highest satisfaction in performing it. Hence the very first effect of the renewing of the mind adduced by St Paul is that it enables us to prove, to ascertain *i. e.* and thoroughly appreciate, what is that good, that acceptable, and that perfect will of God¹. Hence it is predicted as one of the most signal blessings of the new dispensation, that all who belong to it shall be taught of God. Hence the great office of the Comforter, whose spiritual presence is well purchased by Christ's bodily absence, is to lead his disciples into all necessary truth; an office he exercises on *all* Christ's followers according to St John; for that Apostle, addressing Christians in general declares, "Ye have an unction from the holy one, and ye *know all things*²."

For we should greatly err did we confine the promises of these and similar passages to the discovery of mere theoretic or doctrinal truth. They do indeed include

¹ Rom. xii. 2.

² 1 John ii. 20.

this: but they include much more along with it. All that is necessary to be known for our guidance in the disposition of our time and means: all the knowledge we require in order to perform the will of God in all its fulness in the everyday concerns of life, is directly and not merely by implication, meant: the office of the Spirit is to supply by His celestial influence the wisdom which we require in order to live wholly unto God: so that both in respect of knowledge and of will St Paul defines the new nature when he says: "I live: yet not I," (not that old nature which I received by personal descent from Adam,) "but Christ liveth in me," by his spirit *i. e.*; "and the life which I now live in the flesh," until the spiritual body shall have taken its place, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me¹."

3. There is still however one change remaining to be considered: perhaps the last in order of time, certainly the least complete and the least perceptible in the present world. We may have both the knowledge and the will to do that which is right in a very high degree, with very little of the *power*.

To conceive this, we must conceive that the implantation of the new nature in the regenerate does not at once destroy the old: that the two natures exist together in the Christian, and that the struggle between them is not ended, the victory of the one over the other is not complete, till death releases us from that body which is the very stronghold of our natural corruption. Now the

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

influence of our body is particularly felt in our *actions*, because they practically require its instrumentality: and it therefore contracts our *power of performing* what is right, much more than either our knowledge of it or our inclination for it. Hence St Paul describing the struggle between the two natures which coexist in every Christian until death frees him from the one, with the deepest truth represents our inclination as neutralized by our inability: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do¹." For that this passage describes the state of man in so far as he is actually under the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit is decided by the words which follow in the 22nd verse, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." For the inward man is nothing but the new creature, the new implanted, never-dying nature, the regenerated will. Here then, my brethren, we come to the ground and full meaning of the petition, "Forgive us our debts." It rests upon the fact, that though we are God's dear children in the Son of his eternal love, our adoption will not be completed until the redemption of our body: that

¹ Rom. vii. 15—19.

two opposite principles are therefore struggling in every Christian, the victory of one of which, though assured, is slowly and painfully achieved. It rests upon the fact again that God who hath begun will not abandon: that "if God be for us, none can be against us¹:" that "there is none to condemn, since Christ hath died, and now sitteth at the right hand of God, ever making intercession for us." All the sins of omission and commission which we incur during the progress of the struggle, provided only we truly and heartily repent, God engages to forgive by the very fact of the existence of that struggle. If the just man, he *i.e.* who is, in the Apostle's language, continually receiving the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, falls seven times, seven times does he by God's covenanted mercy rise again². But let none construe this as sanctioning or excusing sin: only they in whom their natural corruption is being actually and surely, though gradually and slowly, subdued, have any right to expect pardon for its still remaining fruits: only they who with their whole hearts believe in the Lord Jesus Christ have any right to believe in the forgiveness of their sins: only they who with Paul are tempted to burst into the despairing cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" can with Paul in truth and soberness triumphantly rejoin, "I thank God" who hath delivered "through Jesus Christ our Lord³!"

Yes, gracious God! it is in Him alone that we can

¹ Rom. viii. 31—34. ² Prov. xxiv. 16. ³ Rom. vii. 24, 25.

invoke Thee as our Father : it is in Him alone we can beseech Thee to pardon our iniquities, because in Him alone we see at once the greatness of our guilt and the surpassing greatness of Thy love. In Him alone do we receive that inward man, that thorough change of heart according to which we delight in Thy law : in Him alone do we long to be in perfect concord with Thy holy will, and to have perfect power to accomplish it : and as through the teaching of His Spirit we know and feel that in the unforced unselfish performance of Thy will resides the highest good of which created beings are susceptible, as we therefore with intense conviction pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven :" so do we approach Thee in Him with no simulated sorrow for the transgressions and short-comings which still, alas ! too plainly prove that we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect¹. And as day by day we are instructed to petition for the bread which sustains our bodies, so do we thank Thee that day by day we are likewise permitted to petition for the pardon that must save our souls. Day by day, therefore, do we "magnify Thy name," by confessing our own unworthiness and appealing to Thy boundless mercy: day by day, in all humility and with contrition that is but deepened by the increasing conviction of Thy mercy, do we pray Thee to help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood. Oh help us, gracious Lord, by renewing our strength to do Thy will, and by forgiving the trespasses we are continu-

¹ Phil. iii. 12.

ally committing against Thy will ; and be not weary of thus continually pardoning (it is from Thine own mouth we gather boldness thus to pray), be not weary of forgiving day by day our daily trespasses, until that glorious period shall have arrived when Thy name shall be universally and completely hallowed, when Thy kingdom shall have come in all its power, and Thy will shall be done on earth in all the fulness in which it is now done in heaven : when there shall be no more sorrow, no more sighing, because sin being utterly abolished, there shall be no more trespasses to be forgiven.

NOTE A.

The profane lines of Byron will occur to every one who has read his most immoral production :

“ Oh Pleasure, you are a very pleasant thing,
Altho' one must be damned for you, no doubt.”

I quote them because they exactly express that “ factitious anger against God,” which attempts to make out that what conscience declares and revelation confirms, is harsh and unjust.

NOTE B.

I am aware that this position will at first sight seem startling, and perhaps offensive ; since it includes every human being—even, infants, whom it is usual to regard as incapable of sinning. But let any one inclined to doubt it, in the first place reflect, where he would draw the line of demarcation,

which should separate the *unsinning* from the *sinning* portion of any child's existence? And if he find it impossible to say where he would do this—just as impossible as he would find it to say where he would draw the line of demarcation between the *unreasoning* and the *reasoning* portion of any child's existence—let him further consider whether this impossibility does not in fact arise from the fact that there really is no portion of that existence during which either the faculty of reason or the sinful nature is absolutely dormant. And though indications of the existence and activity of them both may be extremely slight, yet to reflecting persons who very carefully watch children in the very earliest stage of infancy, such indications will, I think, unmistakeably present themselves. In the second place, let any one who is still inclined to doubt, consider the stringency of the Apostle's language, “because *all* sinned:” recollecting, that these words occur in a passage evidently of the most accurately considered reasoning, expressed in the most accurately chosen words. If the words of our Saviour, “Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven,” be urged in answer to this view, I would request that it may be considered, whether our Saviour by these words meant to represent little children as sinless or not? Surely not: since else he would be laying down an impossible condition for entering into the kingdom of heaven: there being none sinless until the great change come which shall extinguish the old nature completely. It is evidently their *harmlessness*, (the “innocency” of the Baptismal Service,) their *trustfulness*, and their *simplicity*, in which he sets them forth as models.

NOTE C.

The position here laid down, viz. that death is to be regarded in two distinct aspects, as the *consequence* of sin, and as the *punishment* of sin, *always* as its *consequence*, but *not always* as its *punishment*, which position results necessarily, as I conceive, from the reasoning of St Paul in this most important

passage, may be proved also by the consideration, that if God forgives the sins of any, he cannot at the same time exact the penalty of their sins. To persons whose sins are forgiven, therefore, death cannot be the penalty or punishment of sin. It is simply its consequence, and nothing more.

I use the word *punishment* throughout in its proper sense, viz. in the sense of a penalty inflicted by way of satisfaction for the offence, and not for the purpose of effecting the improvement of the offender. Any thing inflicted for the latter purpose is properly termed *chastisement*; though these two words are often used interchangably. And not merely are they interchanged, but, as in the conduct of human affairs, these two objects are always mixed up together except in the case of the punishment of death, (the lawfulness of which has recently been called in question on this very ground, viz. that it cannot, in the very nature of things, aim at the improvement of the offender, i. e. that it cannot be a *chastisement* as well as a *punishment*) and as they are always combined with a third object, which is a kind of offshoot from the second, viz. the improvement of society at large, by deterring others from committing a like offence to that the punishment of which they see; it has hence become common to use the word *punishment* in an extended sense so as to comprise the idea of *chastisement* as well as that which is appropriate to itself; and hence indeed has arisen a great deal of the loose and inaccurate thinking which has crept into popular favour of late on the topic of *punishment*; and which has exhibited itself particularly in the arguments by which capital punishment has been assailed: one of which has been adverted to above.

Recollecting that *punishment* and *chastisement* are words implying two distinct and different objects, generally, though not always, combined, in human government, we may be prepared for an assertion which might otherwise seem strange; viz. that in the case of the true Christian these objects are never combined in the Divine government; i. e. that the Christian is not *punished*, though he be *chastised*; the object of God's treatment of him not being to exact the penalty of his violated law,

that penalty having been remitted him¹ in Christ, but simply to benefit and improve the offender. This principle, however strange it may seem at first sight to some of my readers, will be found to be borne out by every passage of the New Testament which treats of the spiritual discipline of the Christian. Thus, when the Corinthians are visited with sickness, or even death, for their gross abuse of the Lord's Supper, the apostle tells them that even this visitation is for their spiritual good (1 Cor. xi. 32). "When we are judged, we are *chastened*," or "instructed, *παιδευόμεθα*, by the Lord; to the end that we may not be condemned, i. e. *punished*, with the world." When the incestuous person is delivered to Satan (1 Cor. v. 5), it is "with the result (*eis*) of the destruction of the flesh," but "with the purpose (*iv̄a*) that the Spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Here death, or sickness tending to death, appears as the *consequence* or *result* of sin, whilst its *object* is clearly stated to be, not punishment but chastisement. Again, when Hymenæus and Alexander were delivered over to Satan, (1 Tim. i. 20) it is "with the purpose (*iv̄a*) that they may be instructed (*παιδευθώσι*) not to blaspheme." The exhortation to the Hebrews, xii. 5—11, is precisely to the same effect. In fact, wherever the afflictions that befall the Christian are spoken of in the New Testament, they are spoken of as fatherly corrections, not to satisfy divine justice, but to promote the welfare of the individual afflicted: and this, however gross may have been the sins for which he is thus visited. The expression Ps. xcix. 8, "thou wast a God that forgavest them, *though* thou tookest vengeance on their inventions," *seems* indeed opposed to this view; but those who consult the original will find that the word "*though*" is introduced by the translators to express what in the Hebrew is the simple copula "*and*"; so that the thought of the original is perverted by this unauthorized "*though*": the verse being more properly translated, "thou wast a God forgiving them, and

¹ *δι Χριστον*, Eph. iv. 32, words inaccurately and inadequately rendered in the authorised version "for Christ's sake."

taking vengeance on their presumptuous sins ;” for such is the meaning of the word עֲלֵיכֶם ; so that the thought expressed by the Psalmist is, that God forgave them (when penitent), and took vengeance on their presumptuous, or unrepented of, sins ; on such, i. e. as by their very nature were incapable of being forgiven.

NOTE D.

I have endeavoured in this translation to express correctly the distinctive meanings of the words δικαιώμα and δικαιώσις, which in one verse, v. 18, are seen at once by every one who reads the original to be distinct, and which, it seems to me, so accurate a reasoner, and so good a Greek scholar as St Paul, must have intended to use distinctively throughout the whole passage. The three words δικαιώμα, δικαιώσις, δικαιοσύνη, stand to each other thus : δικαιώμα the cause of δικαιώσις, and δικαιώσις again the cause of δικαιοσύνη ; i. e. Christ’s *reparation* or atonement the cause of his people’s *justification*, and their *justification* again the cause of their *righteousness*, or *sanctification*. Hence is seen the exquisite propriety of the phraseology in the 17th verse, where the apostle speaks of those who are *in the act of receiving* or *continually receiving* (for such is the force of the present participle λαμβάνοντες) the abundance of the gift of righteousness ; δικαιοσύνη being a gift habitual in its exercise not only, but also perennial in its impartation.

It must be remarked how the expressions in the 17th verse explain those in the 19th verse. For whilst the latter verse, taken by itself, might seem to assert that the whole of mankind shall be ultimately saved, we see, by the 17th verse, that salvation, if it be equivalent to the reigning in life there spoken of, is limited to those who are continually receiving the abundance of the gift of righteousness ; to those, i. e. who are actually in process of being sanctified. But nothing restricts this last condition to those who are aware of that act of reparation by which the gift of righteousness is made possible.

I cannot conclude this note without taking the occasion

to express my surprise that a gentleman who has lately been elected to the high station of Divinity Professor in the University of Oxford, should have thought the old translation of ἐφ' ἣ, in v. 12, by "in quo" admissible; though indeed his idea of the admissibility of this rendering is even less extraordinary than the reasoning by which he endeavours to shew that, even supposing these words to be rendered as they are in the authorized version, the passage must mean the same thing as if they were rendered "in quo^l."

NOTE E.

The doctrine of *imputed righteousness* is true or false according to the sense in which it is understood. If it is taken as meaning that *Christ's righteousness is imputed to his followers*, then it is entirely without support from Scripture. If it be taken as meaning that *God imputes righteousness to us*, i. e. *considers us as righteous for Christ's sake*, then it is clearly asserted in Rom. iv. 6, and as clearly defined in Rom. iv. 8; since there the Apostle quotes from Ps. xxxii. the words "to whom the Lord will not impute sin," as synonymous with his own expression, "to whom God imputeth righteousness." That is: *Imputed Righteousness*, in St Paul's meaning, is nothing but *forgiven sin*.

NOTE F.

The words of the original John iii. 2 might be more properly rendered, "We know that thou art come from God in the capacity of a teacher:" the stress of Nicodemus' confession thus coming on the definition of our Lord's office as a Teacher. This shews more clearly whereon the stress of our Lord's reply comes: viz. on the assertion of something beyond the power of teaching to effect being the object of his mission: so that his answer in relation to Nicodemus' confession may be fairly thus paraphrased: Thou sayest I am come from God as a Teacher:

¹ See Heurtley's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 19.

but I say unto thee, that except a man be born again, or from above, except he be actually renovated in his nature, and not merely taught in his mind, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. It is obvious how the passage thus conceived—and I believe every Greek scholar will agree with me in the propriety of the rendering on which this paraphrase is based—coincides with the general object of this particular Evangelist, viz. the asserting the superhuman character of Christ as essential to the supernatural character of his work.

SERMON VI.

ST MATTH. vi. 12, and 14, 15.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . . For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

IT is now two years, my brethren, since in this church I commenced a series of Sermons on the Lord's Prayer. That series, long interrupted by various causes, I this day purpose, with God's blessing, to resume. And I cannot but think that that part of one of its petitions on which we are about to meditate is particularly suitable to the occasion. For this, my brethren, is the last Sunday of the Christian year: we have just heard the last Collect, the last Epistle and Gospel in the long string of the Sundays after Trinity: on the next Lord's day we shall recommence the set with the forms prescribed for Advent Sunday. And surely no contemplation can be more natural at the close of the Christian year, than the contemplation of those spiritual blessings we have enjoyed throughout its course: and no thought can be more naturally suggested by the contemplation of those blessings than the thought how sadly we have all

of us neglected and abused them. The reflection on past mercies cannot but shew us how many debts we have all of us incurred to God; and how much therefore we need that remission and forgiveness which we are not authorized to pray for, and are positively forbidden to expect, unless we be ourselves prepared to forgive our fellow-men their trespasses. May the God of all mercy be with us this morning, and enable us, with hearts bowed before him in sincere repentance, to realize all the meaning of what his blessed Son hath taught us when he directs us to add to the petition "forgive us our debts" the condition "even as we forgive our debtors;" and when immediately after concluding his instructions how to pray he recurs to this particular topic, as if it were beyond all others of paramount importance, and perhaps difficulty; and declares: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

Our meditations may, I think, be most conveniently distributed under two heads: the one being an examination into the *meaning* of the command to forgive men their trespasses against us; the other, a few brief words of application as to its *necessity*. And may the Spirit of truth be with both preacher and hearers to guide us into all truth upon this important subject!

1. First then we are to examine what the forgiveness is which we are commanded to extend to our fellow-men before we can *expect*, nay, before we can even *pray*

to be forgiven ourselves. And here it may be possibly objected that surely such inquiry must be superfluous, inasmuch as we all know the meaning of the word *forgive* sufficiently before. But though we are all familiar enough with the meaning of the word, we may perhaps not so readily or spontaneously reflect that that meaning is somewhat modified in its application to different cases : or perhaps I should rather say, that in some cases we attach a further meaning to the word, which meaning does not properly reside therein. To illustrate this, we have only to consider the very different cases of two persons, both of whom have injured us, we will say, to the same extent ; but the one of whom has acknowledged that he has done so, has begged our forgiveness, and has thus done all he can to evince that he has really and sincerely repented of the injury he has inflicted : whilst the other has neither acknowledged that he has done amiss, nor begged forgiveness ; and thus has evinced a determined obduracy and impenitence. Now it is plain from both my texts, that, as we cannot even pray to be forgiven ourselves unless we have forgiven them that trespass against us, and as our Saviour with the utmost emphasis twice reiterates the declaration that God's forgiveness of ourselves depends entirely on our forgiving others, and as in both these cases not one word is said which might restrict the number of those we are commanded to forgive to such alone as have not merely injured us but have also repented of their injuries ; it is plain, I say, from both my texts that we are bound to

forgive *all* who have any ways trespassed against us, whether they be penitent or no. All alike must be forgiven, if we ourselves would be forgiven. Yet it is impossible, simply and blankly impossible, to regard with the same feelings the man who acknowledges his fault, and the man who denies or perhaps even glories in that fault. It is simply and purely impossible with that constitution which God hath given us, to entertain the same sentiments towards the man who having wronged us, refuses even to repent, much more to repair his wrong, as towards the man who having done us an equal or even a greater wrong, does nevertheless subsequently repent and subdue his pride so far as to say to us, I have sinned, and to entreat our pardon, even though he be unable to make any reparation for the offence. Nor let any one object that this arises from our original constitution being vitiated by the fall: that were we now as Adam was, with God's image freshly stamped and still unchanged upon him, we should entertain precisely the same feelings towards the unrepentant as towards the repenting trespasser against us. This is not the case. God himself, in whose image we were originally made, entertains not the same disposition towards the unrepentant as towards the repentant: God himself, in whose image we are as Christians to be renewed in righteousness and true holiness, though he so loved the world and all the sinners it contains as to give his only-begotten Son to death on its account, did so precisely in order that the proclamation of this his exceeding love should bring to

repentance and confession of their sins those who otherwise would never have felt that they had anything whereof to repent: and that repenting and believing they might not perish, as they otherwise must, but have eternal life. And if God regard not with the same disposition the unrepenting and the penitent, how can man be called upon to do so? Surely this would be aiming at being more perfect than our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Nor must there be a difference of *inward feeling* only towards those trespassers who repent, and those who do not repent: there must be likewise a corresponding difference in *external conduct*. And this, my brethren, we are not left merely to infer; we have plain and explicit instructions on the subject given us by our Lord himself. In the 18th chapter of St Matthew, at the 15th and following verses we read thus: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” The case here put by our blessed Lord is that of one who is connected with us not merely by the common brotherhood which unites all humanity, but by that special and far closer tie which binds together those

who belong to the same religious community, who profess the same saving faith, and have the same glorious hopes with ourselves. If such an one trespass against us we are therefore doubly bound to forgive him, whether he acknowledge his trespass and desire to be forgiven, or no. But whilst we are to forgive him whether he repent or not, we are explicitly commanded to use every effort to bring him to a confession of his fault : we are to remonstrate with him in private, we are, if such private remonstrance be unavailing, to remonstrate with him again in the presence of as many witnesses as may be sufficient to substantiate the fact ; if this too be unavailing, we are to tell the matter to the whole congregation of the faithful in the place in which we happen to reside ; and if this final and most solemn appeal be still disregarded, we are expressly bade, notwithstanding having forgiven him, from henceforth to regard him as a heathen man and a publican : i. e. to treat him as one who is out of the pale of the Christian community, and with whom, as being obstinately and notoriously wicked, we cannot keep up close or confidential intercourse. If then it be asked, what means the forgiveness we are commanded to extend even to a person whom we are also commanded thus to treat ? I answer : it means that we entirely clear our minds of all feelings of resentment, and of all desire for revenge ; that we resign entirely all consideration of the debt as due to ourselves, and only consider it in so far as it is due to God ; that the concern we feel be not for the injury we have ourselves received, but for the sin against

God which the doing that injury has involved. Everything therefore we can do to promote the real welfare of such a trespassing unrepenting brother we are bound to do: even as our Father which is in heaven "sends down his rain upon the good and upon the evil, and causes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust;" nay, we are bound to take especial pains to do good to such persons, because they especially stand in need of it: even as God's own Son took not on him the nature of sinless angels, but the nature of the sinful sons of men, that he might save them from the consequences of their trespasses against himself: we are bound, as that Saviour himself directs us, "to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us." But we are not bound to regard those who injure us without repenting, with the same feelings with which we regard those who having injured us, repent: nay, we are bound to regard them with different feelings, if the conduct is to be always the true expression of the feelings: for whilst we are to forgive them from our heart and to pray for them, as who indeed more need our prayers? we are nevertheless to mark our disapprobation of what they have done amiss, and to testify to them (as well as others) that obstinate impenitence in wrong-doing is inconsistent with Christianity, by treating them, in our Lord's words, as "heathen men and publicans."

And observe, my brethren, that this conduct is not merely enjoined by our Saviour, but a very sufficient

reason for it is incidentally suggested by him. For when telling us to remonstrate with an offending brother privately at first, he subjoins by way of encouragement, “If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Nothing can be more calculated to encourage a man in wrong courses, than the passing over those courses without notice or rebuke. We are too apt to shut our eyes against our own faults, even when they are plainly and clearly set before us: how much more then should we be inclined to ignore the existence of those faults, if nothing in the conduct of our fellow-men towards us ever reminded us of their existence? Can we imagine anything more calculated to beget a fatal apathy than speaking “peace, peace, where there is no peace?” And would it not be thus speaking peace, where there is no peace, if we allowed an offending and unrepenting brother to go on in his trespasses without remonstrance or reproof? if we treated him precisely as if he had not trespassed, or as if he had repented of his trespass? Surely the very love we are enjoined to bear towards even those who hate us, tells us that we ought to do all we can to bring them to a sense of the sin they are committing in hating us: the very prayers we are commanded to offer up for those who despitefully use us and persecute us, require that our conduct should harmonize with our prayers in endeavouring to reclaim them. That true solicitude for the real and eternal welfare of those who trespass against us, which is involved in our forgiving them, as it excludes all feeling of resentment and all desire of retaliation, so does it ex-

clude the hypocrisy of pretending to treat them as though they had not offended: and in this case we see, as in every other, that Scripture coincides exactly with sound sense; and that the service it requires us to render unto God, in forgiving others before we pray to be forgiven ourselves, is indeed “a reasonable service.”

I have dwelt the longer on this head because I believe there is much misunderstanding prevalent upon it, however clear it be as soon as it is fully stated and explained. What has been said upon it, sufficiently elucidates the meaning of forgiveness in itself, and serves to shew that when we speak of forgiving in the case of one who, after trespassing against us, has confessed his fault, we include in the term something which goes beyond itself. We include in it in such a case the idea of *perfect reconciliation*: of taking the penitent offender into the same place in our esteem, as well as in our affections, which he occupied before. And this, indeed, is meant by the words I was just now citing, “if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” For what is the “gaining our brother,” save the restoring to him all the privileges and feelings which belong to brotherhood? And thus we see that the forgiveness which we are to extend to the repenting offender, implies the assurance that he is to us precisely what he was before he offended: that no lingering taint has been left in our memory to poison the generous confidence of unreserved intercourse: that his offence, whatever it be, is not only forgiven, but forgotten. In a word, our forgiveness of one who begs us to

forgive the fault of which he is sincerely sorry, must be like that which God hath promised to extend to all such as with true penitent heart and lively faith turn to him: and as He has promised to blot out the sins of such from his book, and not merely to pardon, but actually "*not to remember* their iniquities any more," so should we, if we expect that pardon from Him, without obtaining which we cannot conceive true peace of mind in this world, or aught but misery in the world to come, be ready to do to others as we would be done by: to welcome back not merely to our houses, but to our hearts, all who confess that they have wronged us. Let the parable of the Prodigal Son teach us not merely to what extent we may expect to be forgiven by our Father which is in heaven, but also what is the nature of that forgiveness which by his dear Son he in that parable assures to every real penitent, however great his former crimes; and whilst we dwell upon that exquisitely touching story with those emotions it is so well calculated to excite, let us learn from the example there set forth, not merely the nature and the duty, but also the *luxury* of pardoning the penitent.

2. I now come to the second part of my discourse, and beg your attention to a few words on the *necessity* of forgiving others. Now the whole reasoning, expressed and implied, in my two texts relating to this point, goes out from the supposition that we ourselves are each of us continually trespassing against God, and have therefore continual need of being forgiven. This our sinfulness is

a thing indeed which so underlies all true religion, that without a thorough sense of it, it is perfectly impossible that we should be Christians in anything beyond mere *name*. Unless we feel that we are in daily need of the Divine forgiveness, we have not comprehended the very alphabet of Christianity. Elementary, however, as is this feeling in the Christian consciousness, it is yet extremely difficult to rouse. Ready as we all are to confess with the lip that we are miserable sinners, our hearts are in general far from the confession. And therefore it is necessary for us, that the fact of our being so, should be continually brought experimentally before us. Now it is impossible to sin against God, without sinning likewise against man: the violation of the first and great commandment necessarily involves the violation of that second which is like unto it. Now our duty to man is much more easily recognized, both in its performance and its infraction, than our duty towards God: in the violation of the second commandment therefore, that which bids us love our neighbour as ourself, we most easily detect the violation of the first, which bids us love God with all our heart and soul and strength: and thus in the sufferings we ourselves endure at the hands of our fellow-men, in the wrongs they inflict upon us, we have as it were a gauge to test the measure of their sinning against God. But as no one would pretend on sober reflection to be an exception to his race, as no one would seriously claim to be exempt from the evil passions and inclinations of his fellow-men, so the sufferings which

each himself has to endure from his fellow-men serve to teach him not merely *their* sinfulness, but his *own*. Whatever any one has to endure at the hands of others, he may be sure it lies in his own nature to inflict on others: for we are all partakers of the same nature. His own sinfulness therefore forces itself upon the consciousness of every one, not only by his *doings*, but in his *sufferings*. Thus does the overruling Providence of God contrive to elicit good from evil, and to make the very wrath of man become man's teacher. Now, if this teaching have been listened to, if any one in the depravity of others and his own consequent distresses has beheld his own depravity reflected as in a mirror, then, and then only, will he be ready to extend to others that forgiveness which he feels he so much needs himself. If, on the other hand, he have never learned this lesson: if he recognise not the family likeness which obtains between all the children of Adam in respect of sin, then will he be full of bitterness on the reception of those injuries which on his course through life he will inevitably meet with, and deem it a hard thing to be called on to forgive. And precisely in the same degree in which he feels it hard to forgive others, will he feel it unnecessary to be forgiven himself: because his own sufferings and wrongs have never made him realize the sinfulness of that common nature whence they proceed. Hence we see with what perfect wisdom our Lord hath coupled together these two things, and made our readiness to forgive the indispensable qualification for our being forgiven: since our readiness to forgive others is

the exact measure of the truth and strength of our conviction that we require to be forgiven ourselves. Nor is this all. At each fresh injury we each of us receive from time to time at the hands of others, we experience afresh the whole difficulty of forgiving : and thus are continually roused from the lethargy of habitual unthinking confession of our trespasses, and furnished with a continually renewed test of the sincerity of our repentance, and the urgency of our conscious need of pardon. The petition, "forgive us our trespasses," is saved from degenerating into an empty unfelt form by our being continually called on to forgive men their trespasses : whilst at the same time the *nature*, and in some degree, the *magnitude* of the boon we petition for, are thus represented to our minds by our own experience. If we find it so hard to forgive men the hundred pence which they owe to us, is it a small thing which we so glibly ask of God and expect at his hands as a matter of course ? If when we feel the sting of ingratitude we find it difficult to forgive the man on whom we have conferred some basely requited kindness, may we not profitably ask whether we who thus writhe under the pang inflicted on us by a fellow-mortal have not ourselves "*grieved the holy Spirit*" of God, whose gracious strivings have continually been urging us to accept the salvation purchased by the blood of God's own Son ? When we see all our efforts to promote the well-being of some fellow-mortal met with thankless unconcern, or rewarded with jealous suspicion,—when we find that our patient endurance of past wrongs is construed into an acknow-

ledgement of guilt, and made the very ground of doing us fresh wrong,—may we not then profitably ask whether we ourselves do not exhibit towards *God* the very same disposition which seems so hateful when exhibited towards *us*? Do *we* not too generally take the bounties of our Creator and Preserver with the same heartless, callous unconcern, which looks so vile when we are ourselves its objects? Do *we* not too generally forget the gracious Being whose large and liberal hand daily loadeth us with benefits? Do *we* not forget, or pass over with slight and official notice, the wondrous, the stupendous sacrifice by which he who is infinitely pure, hath reconciled the stern necessities of his justice with the gentle relentings of his mercy? Do we not too generally forget the precious blood “which healeth all our diseases, which redeemeth our life from destruction, and reneweth our youth” unto an immortality of glory? And when perchance after some day spent in seeking our own things and not the things of Christ, we then kneel down and carelessly ask him, whom we could never approach acceptably but for the infinite agony of the Redeemer, to “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;” may we not reckon it as a mercy if the unkindness or the injustice we have met with during the day at the hands of our fellow-mortals checks the perfunctory petition, and recalls to our dormant consciences the greatness of the boon we ask, by making us feel the difficulty of granting it ourselves?

Yes, my brethren, to be called on to forgive is useful,

because it enables us to appreciate the being forgiven ; to forgive others is indispensable, because without it we may be sure our own penitence is insincere. Nothing is more easy than to fancy ourselves penitent ; nothing more difficult than to be so in reality. If the off-hand confession that we are miserable sinners would avail, all the world would be saved : for there are comparatively few who deny that they are guilty before God : but this careless and lukewarm admission is not what God requires. His sacrifices are the broken spirit, the contrite heart, which feels its own misery and sin so strongly, that all the offences it may have to pardon in others fade into insignificance when compared with its own offences against God. If therefore we find that we cannot forgive men their trespasses, we may rest assured that we have not the least idea of the magnitude of our trespasses : that our own sins of omission and commission have never been made known unto us by his law, nor ever displayed to us in the awful light of his countenance. Yet a time will come when the King shall call us all to account for the use we have made of his property : for the means, the time, the talents, the influence we have enjoyed, and ought to have employed in his service. Are we prepared to meet the dread investigation ? Are we prepared to prove that we are not his debtors ? or are we not forced when we think upon this to say, " Enter not into judgment, O Lord ! for in thy sight shall no man living be justified !" And if this be the feeling which necessarily rises in every mind that is not absolutely steeled against conviction, who

then are *we* that we should insist with jealous accuracy on the hundred pence which may be due to us from some fellow-sinner, when we owe to God ten thousand talents, and must be for ever ruined unless he freely forgive us all¹?

But these considerations, my brethren, do not exhaust the subject. It is not as though what we are called on to forgive were radically different from that for which we beg to be forgiven. Men's trespasses against *ourselves* are trespasses against *God*: the debts they owe to *us*, they owe to *us* merely as to *God's stewards*. And shall we be more stringent in exacting what is not our own than is the owner? Are not the trespasses of others against ourselves part of the load of sin which Christ bore in his own body on the tree? And is *His* precious blood too small a compensation to *us*, for those trespasses against us which contributed to the agonies of the Redeemer?

This thought, brethren, does indeed put the whole subject in a new and most impressive light. When we see the trespasses of others against ourselves in their real nature, as being, first and foremost, trespasses against God, we then perceive that the cause is God's, not ours: and that into *His* hands we must commend it. As David, after perpetrating on Uriah the two greatest injuries which can be done by man to man, nevertheless felt and declared that it was against *God*, against *God only*, that he had sinned, inasmuch as the man whom he had wronged and murdered

¹ Matt. xviii. 21—35.

was but God's representative and *factor* (so to speak) : so we, when we receive an injury from any one, may say with perfect truth and without the least presumption, Against Thee, Thee only, has this sin been done : into thy hands I commend its vindication. And how does the thought that vengeance for each most private and individual injury done to ourselves, belongs to God ; that he will repay the wrongs done to himself in the persons of his servants ; how does this thought chasten down the painful sense of individual injury into the solemn and saddening feeling of the general sinfulness of man ! Far from encouraging a vindictive spirit, it is calculated to quell all feelings of revenge in the contemplation of the awful magnitude of the guilt we see men constantly incurring without a thought of the great Being against whom it is all really incurred ! The anger which might arise at the wrong done to ourselves fades into pale horror when we think that it is the Judge of quick and dead who has been insulted in our persons : the puny arm we might otherwise raise in hasty retaliation sinks in breathless awe when we see the gathering gloom of the last day and hear the distant muttering of its thunders. “ Vengeance is mine—I will repay ! ” Oh ! if it be a fearful thing indeed, a thing beyond all imaginable fearfulness, to fall into the hands of the living God, how can we but find it in our hearts not merely to forgive our own share of injury and wrong, but to intercede for those who in our persons have been running up a fearful score of vengeance ! Rather than punish, shall we not pardon and pray for those who

despitefully use us, since indeed they know not that in doing it to the least and humblest of his creatures, they are doing it unto the Creator's Self!

There is yet one further consideration on this subject which I would submit to your most serious notice in conclusion.

You are all familiar with the parable of the ten thousand talents which I have alluded to in this discourse. The occasion on which it was delivered was a question put to our Lord by Peter: a question which may well seem strange coming from a person who had heard the emphatic declaration of my texts. The twice repeated injunction to forgive others if we would be forgiven ourselves coming after a prayer the language of which implies that forgiveness is daily needed and must be daily sought, might, one would think, have taught the Apostle that however frequently his brother might offend against him, he must nevertheless as frequently forgive him. Yet Peter, as we find in Matt. xviii. 21, came to Jesus and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? and seems to have thought that he was giving a wide range when he suggested "until seven times?" Our blessed Lord, doubtless perceiving by this question how little Peter realized his own condition, is not satisfied with barely answering it in such a way as to shew that no limits are to be set to the extent of our forgiveness, but proceeds to illustrate the reasonableness as well as the duty of forgiveness, by a parable, which at the same time holds out a most solemn warning to God's

people; for to them, observe, it is addressed. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven." "*Therefore* is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants." Now, brethren, why is this parable introduced with the word *therefore*, except to shew that it is an answer to the spirit of the question which called it forth? That question shewed that a man like Peter, a man whose sins had doubtless been forgiven by God, who believed sincerely and firmly on him whom he was the first to acknowledge as God's Son, was nevertheless in danger of so far forgetting the magnitude of the debt which had been remitted to *himself*, as to be already calculating the exact amount of the debt he might be expected to remit to his *brother*. To meet this emergency our Lord therefore contrived a narrative which might precisely illustrate the danger which Peter was at the time incurring, and which he knew that Christians throughout all ages would only be too ready to incur. The injunctions to which we have hitherto directed our attention represent our forgiving others as the essential condition of our *obtaining* forgiveness: but the parable of the ten thousand talents represents our forgiving others as the essential condition of our *retaining* that forgiveness which hath *already* been *obtained*. The unmerciful debtor had been pardoned; but in consequence of his refusing to extend the same indulgence to his fellow-servant which his lord had extended to himself, *his pardon was revoked*. He had been freely forgiven the ten thousand talents

which he owed, and which he could never pay : but because he would not forgive his fellow-servant the hundred pence, his lord delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due unto him. Let us take warning from his example. In the first novelty of awakened convictions, in the first overwhelming accusations of conscience, in the first moments of the sense of pardon, we may perhaps be incapable of ungenerously denying to others that which we have just experienced ourselves on so much more magnificent a scale : it may be unlikely that when first we hear the words of compassion from the mouth of our much injured Lord, when first we saw the price which was paid for our transgressions, we could insist with jealous rigour on our own rights, and take our debtors by the throat. But a time may come when, having gone out from the presence of our merciful Lord, we may forget his benefits : a time may come when the first flush of novel gratitude shall have given way to the self-satisfied contentment of ancient and assured possession : when being no longer overwhelmed by the hopelessness of accumulated debt we shall have ceased to remember the agony with which we sought its remission. There is such a thing, as the very Apostle whose question occasioned this parable assures us, there is such a thing as *the becoming forgetful of the purification of former sins*¹. From the fearful consequences of such forgetfulness may God in his infinite mercy deliver us !

Those who have been forgiven much, naturally love

¹ 2 Pet. i. 9.

much in return : they love God, whose mercy has been so signally extended to themselves : they love the brethren, who are the common objects of God's bounty, and animated with a common affection for the Redeemer. But it is because they continually feel the greatness of the sins which have been remitted them that they thus love : it is because their "iniquity is ever before them" that their hearts burn with gratitude and sympathy. God may forget, as he has in his unutterable inconceivable mercy promised that he will forget all our sins, and remember our iniquities no more : but such forgetfulness were unsafe for us. We have no better security against pride and all its bad concomitants of unforgiving obduracy and exaggerated sensitiveness, than constant remembrance of what was *our* condemnation before we obtained pardon. If ever we find ourselves getting into a habit of taking for granted the petition in which we daily pray for daily remission of our sins ; if we find ourselves avoiding self-examination upon the subject of our relations with our fellow-men ; if ever we begin to detect a morbid accuracy in recollecting wrongs and injuries ; if ever we find a rising disposition to look rather to our rights on others than to our duties towards others—we may conclude that forgetfulness of past remission is stealing over us, and is blinding us to our present far different state : and if we are wise, if we will condescend to be warned before it be too late by that word of God which refuses to be bound by the trammels of any system of theology, we shall not encourage ourselves with what may be the delusive

assurance of our final perseverance, but shall at once return to our God with the most humble and earnest prayer that he would not suffer us to fall back into the condemnation which awaits those who, forgetting the magnitude of their remitted guilt, for ever forfeit the mercy which they refuse to grant !

SERMON VII.

ST MATTH. iv. 1, and vi. 13.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.”*

THE history to which the first of these texts introduces, and the petition which forms the second, lead to the darkest, at once the most mysterious and most awful, recesses of the human constitution and of the spiritual world. *Temptation* and its *Author* are here brought before us: and we are instructed by the very Being who was designedly exposed thereto, to pray that we may be spared the fearful trial. Let us consider the subject *practically*: and may God enable us to arrive at that practical sense of it which shall conduce to our eternal deliverance from evil!

I invite your attention to a *practical*, as opposed to a *speculative* treatment of the subject, because I am convinced that all speculative knowledge is here denied us. So long as we are in our present state, all we can know is what the Bible plainly tells us. To attempt being wise

above what is written is here the merest folly. For can we pretend to understand how the sinless Son of God could be really tempted of the Evil One to sin? Can we understand how He who was purity impersonated could really feel the seductive force—the persuasive stress—of temptation to do wrong? And yet had not Jesus experienced this in all its energy, how could the Apostle have ventured to comfort us with those words, of which so many have felt the powerful consolation, “We have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one that was in all points tempted like as we are¹!” Of God in his own solitary essence St James declares, that “He cannot be tempted of evil²:” and the very contrast between this declaration concerning God in Himself, and the declaration of another Apostle concerning the God-Man, Christ Jesus, does but more plainly evince and more forcibly exhibit the truth and the reality of our Saviour’s temptation. Unless we shrink from the plainest declarations of Holy Writ, we must believe that Christ was as really tempted as Adam was: as really as any of ourselves are tempted: though unlike Adam and ourselves, “*without sin*¹.” This is the difference. Temptation had no effect on Him, save to enable him more fully to sympathise with us. But *how* this could be—*how* a Being in whose Person the Divine and the Human were inseparably joined could be subjected to the full force and sense of that from which the Divine, *in itself*, is infinitely sundered,—this is a mystery as much

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

² James i. 13.

beyond our comprehension as is that mystery of which it is after all but a single consequence—the mystery of the Incarnation. We may not accept the premisses, and deny the conclusion. We cannot believe that the “Word was made flesh,” and shrink from believing that he shared all the natural and necessary characteristics of the flesh. Let no ostensibly reverential, but really rationalistic, reasoning deprive us of the strong consolation designed to flow from the revealed fact that our Saviour completely sympathizes with us in all our struggles and temptations, because He knows them all by his own experience. Let no pretended zeal for the honour of the Son of God cause us to shrink from investing the Son of Man with all the necessary capacities of humanity. Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the *flesh* is not of God: and if the susceptibility of temptation is a necessary characteristic of humanity, who, without contravening that declaration of the beloved disciple, may dare to say that Jesus Christ had not that susceptibility as much as Adam when he came in the image of his Maker, fresh from his Maker’s hands?

But, if the possibility of being tempted be an unfathomable mystery in the case of Jesus, the second Adam, is it not, after all, an equal mystery in the case of the first Adam? Created, as we are told he was, in the image of God, which image we might of ourselves conclude, even were we not expressly told, consisted in righteousness and holiness, can we really *understand* how he could be tempted to do what he knew to be against God’s will, and

therefore unholy and unrighteous? Can we at all conceive how to such a creature as Adam was before he fell, to a being moulded by the Almighty into exact agreement with his own archetypal perfection,—can we, I say, conceive how to such a being that which he knew to be against his Maker's will could be made to appear attractive? I confess, that to me the Temptation of Adam has always appeared as inscrutable as the Temptation of Christ: and yet that Adam was originally good and sinless, and being tempted was seduced and fell, we must believe if we believe the statements not only of the book of Genesis, but of the Apostles of our Lord himself¹.

I have dwelt on these reflections because they serve to shew the utter folly of either believing or disbelieving anything upon this mysterious subject on merely speculative grounds. If they induce us to relinquish speculation, we shall be the better prepared for deriving the intended practical benefit from the record of our Lord's Temptation. This I purpose to-day considering, as embracing in itself all the main features of those temptations which continually assail all men in an inferior, and all Christians in a superior degree: and as therefore affording the best and most impressive comment on the petition dictated by him who knew all the force of that against which he instructs his followers to pray in the words, “Lead us not into temptation!”

¹ See Rom. v. 12, and following verses; Eph. iv. 22, 23; Eccles. vii. 29.

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil."

Before considering the Temptation itself, it may be well briefly to consider its Author.

The real existence of any such Spiritual Person or Being as the Devil is by many doubted in these days : by some from a wish to get rid of all supernatural agency, by others, more religious but weak, from a fancied liberality, and an unreasoning compliance with the spirit of the age. To these latter persons, with whom alone I have a right to concern myself when addressing an assembly professing to be Christian, I submit this simple argument, that if we believe the Scriptures, we must believe that Satan is a real Person, because the Scriptures affirm his personality just as clearly as they affirm the personal existence of the Deity. Now as Scripture is the only sufficient authority we have for the personal existence of the Deity (for Natural Theology cannot demonstrate it, and hence the infidelity of modern times is everywhere tending to Pantheism, or the denial of a Personal Deity), it seems to me that we must either accept the statements of Scripture concerning Satan as literally as we accept those concerning God, or we must refuse belief to its statements concerning God as well as to those concerning Satan. To those who feel that due reverence for Scripture which Christians ought to feel the conclusion is inevitable : and even to those who deny its authority, it may be useful to weigh this argument, because it may shew them, if they are believers in a personal Deity, how much they

borrow from Scripture without acknowledging or even comprehending their obligations. Nor can it be said that Satan's personality and agency is a representation due to Hebrew poetry, and therefore not to be literally taken: for he is hardly ever mentioned in the Old Testament: it is in the New Testament, and that chiefly in the discourses of our Lord himself, that he is almost exclusively introduced. In refutation of the objections that have been urged against the personal existence of the Adversary this one observation is quite enough: that of the world of spirits we cannot possibly know anything save by direct revelation. It is beyond the domain of the senses, it is beyond the cognizance of reason. A man born blind might therefore as rationally attempt to disprove by a process of reasoning the existence of a sense of which he can know nothing except by testimony, as we attempt by a process of reasoning to disprove the existence of a spirit of whose existence we can know nothing save by testimony. The only point to be ascertained in either case is, whether the testimony be sufficient. If the testimony of Scripture be deemed sufficient, then I cannot see that it is possible to deny the Personal existence of Satan any more than that of God. *How* Satan exists, or *where* at the present time, or how his power *avails*, as we are told it does, to contrive and suggest temptations to the mind of man, and to what extent he is aware of what is passing in men's minds, so as to adapt his suggestions to their weakness, we are not told, and do not therefore know. But our not being told the manner in which his power is

exercised and brought to bear, is no proof of the unreality of that fearful Being who is everywhere in the New Testament exhibited as the adversary of God and goodness, whether in the individual, or in the development of the human race: and who surely never appears in a more awful character than when in “the hour and power of darkness¹” in the wilderness the Son of God was subjected to his seductions, as he was afterwards to his terrors in the garden and on the cross.

Discarding then all considerations as to *how* the Tempter suggested his temptations to our blessed Lord, let us examine these temptations in themselves, in the order in which they are given in the Gospel you have heard read this morning².—Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. Here it would seem he was miraculously supported during forty days and forty nights, in which he ate nothing: for it is expressly said, that *afterwards* only he was an hungred. Seizing on the moment in which bodily exhaustion for the first time felt, and probably felt to excess, might seem to countenance the idea of spiritual abandonment, the Tempter fastens his first suggestion on the *bodily* wants and sufferings of the Saviour. “If thou be the Son of God, speak, that these stones become loaves³. ” Now it must be remarked that this suggestion contains in fact two distinct temptations,

¹ Luke xxii. 53.

² Preached on the first Sunday in Lent, in the Chapel Royal, Dublin.

³ Literal rendering.

one of which acts as a veil to screen the other. It is addressed not merely to the *senses*, as they are given us for the purpose of ensuring self-preservation, by making our necessary wants importunate ; it is addressed thus not merely to the *lust of the flesh* in that sinless degree, in which its satisfaction is not merely guiltless, but *imperative* under ordinary circumstances : it is addressed further to the mental motive of *doubt* or *unbelief*. “*If* thou be the Son of God, it is high time to preserve thyself —especially as by the very act of self-preservation thou wilt prove thy Divine descent. How many hired servants of thy Father have bread enough and to spare, and thou—his Son !—art left here apparently to perish with hunger ! A strange desertion on a Father’s part ! But, being his Son, thou canst of course secure thyself against its consequences : and no doubt it must be thy Father’s wish that thou shouldest do so : thou that art hereafter to save others, mayest well begin by saving thyself.” Ultimately this temptation contains the same thought as that the detection of which in the minds of the men of Nazareth roused them to such frantic rage against Him who had exposed it¹: for no one likes to see his own thoughts set before him stripped of the mask which veiled their ugliness so long as they were unspoken.

But we should conceive a most inadequate idea of the real force of this Temptation, if we supposed it to be merely a recommendation to gratify a necessary and

¹ Luke iv. 23, and following verses.

sinless appetite urged on the Redeemer by hinted unbelief. A further result is contained in the combined suggestion—a result which the Saviour instantly detected, and to which his reply is exclusively directed. Its true scope was to induce Jesus to use the powers of His *Divine nature* for the purpose of relieving His *human nature* of some portion of its allotted task and suffering. “If thou be really the Son of God, thou hast privileges as well as powers: why not speak the word which would at once transform these bare stones, glowing with the reflected heat of an Arabian sun, into fit nourishment for thy human wants? Shall the Son of Man endure that from which the Son of God can in a moment rescue him?” The Tempter ignores the fact that it was by God’s own dispensation that his Son was enduring his present need: that his distress was therefore part of his predestined burden of human woe, and that to use his divine power for the purpose of removing it, would have been not merely to distrust his heavenly Father’s goodness, but to shrink from a portion of his self-chosen work. It is to this accordingly that our Lord addresses his reply. Passing over without the slightest notice the Tempter’s *If*, it simply asserts that, as man lives entirely by God’s decree, without which, indeed, food would have no life-sustaining power at all, so God will know how to preserve those who are in the path of duty without their taking the matter out of His hands. “It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” His word,

by the leading of his Spirit, brought me here, and his word that brought, can sustain me here.

Now, to apply this,—and every one must at once perceive how applicable it is to the case of Christians in particular,—we know that nothing is more common than for men to be led into various difficulties and embarrassments by following out the path of simple duty. There are indeed some favored ones, whose rectitude of conduct seems to meet with instant and universal acknowledgment from both God and man : whom Providence prospers and their fellows honor in all their undertakings. But such is the happy lot of a very few: the majority find that by the very nicety of their conduct they are often involved in difficulties which a less rigid honesty might have avoided. And as this opens on their mind, how strongly does it not suggest doubts of the goodness of that Heavenly Father who can leave his children thus in the waste howling wilderness—perhaps to perish of want ! How naturally then arises the thought, “Can it be that I am really a child of God, when God thus cruelly disregards my prayers, and leaves me a prey to the spoiler ?” And if that thought be rejected, how near lies the tempting suggestion: “If I really *am* a child of God, why not make use of my privileges as such ? I am told that *all* things are mine¹ : whether life or death, things present or things to come: why scruple then to enter at once upon my inheritance ? why scruple to transform these stones into bread by whatever means I can ? why hesitate to

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 21.

avail myself of whatever sleight or dexterity I have to make the pitiless world around subservient to my wants? What is the whole world to the soul of one for whom Christ died? And feeling this, shall I hesitate to use the world for the attainment of my lawful objects? This, brethren, is a temptation to which men are exposed in exact proportion to the sincerity of their belief and the severity of their distress. How it has acted on a great scale, the history of England two hundred years ago may testify. Unknown to those whose Christianity consists only in the name they received in Baptism, and in their grieved desertion by that Holy Spirit which then sealed them, it appeals with terrible force to the consciousness of Sonship which separates the true Christian from the world around him. Convinced that what he wants is nothing beyond what he may justly claim,—nothing but the merest requisites for life and action, how hard to see others less scrupulous than himself, rewarded for their convenient pliancy by wealth and honours whilst he is deprived of all the means with which, if he possessed them, he could do so much good, deprived perhaps of the very necessities of subsistence! Fearful, my brethren, most fearful is the power of a temptation built upon that comparison of the prosperity of the wicked with the misery of the righteous which the Psalmist declares had almost proved the ruin of his faith¹! fearful, most fearful, the power of a temptation which rests on the maddening presence, or the still more maddening prospect of pecuniary

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3.

embarrassment! How few, when they are in that terrible solitude which seems at once to be created round every one by pecuniary misfortune, and when the suggestions of the Tempter are poured forth in the eager accents of those they love with all the more agonizing intensity because they cannot relieve their wants,—how few can meet them with the words of simple trust and confidence in their Heavenly Father, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!” O should not the bare mention of such sufferings—and such sufferings are the unseen, unsuspected lot of thousands—fill us with compassion for those thus sorely tempted, and with that sympathizing indulgence for them that fall, which is the proper fruit and the true criterion of the Christian spirit? And should not the spectacle of temporal distress and the ruin it so often brings upon the spirit, induce us with all our hearts to pray, “Lead us not into temptation!”

Foiled in his first attempt, the Tempter, in what way and by what means we know not, takes Jesus into the holy city, and there sets him upon the pinnacle of the temple: the extreme height of one of those lofty towers which crowned the precipice of Mount Moriah, and commanded the temple courts: and there says to him, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:* for, as thou hast quoted Scripture, is it not written in the Psalms, *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone?* Here, as before, the temp-

tation is two-fold: the hinted doubt of the reality of his divine descent being again made to screen the real nature of the suggestion compliance with which would fully establish it. If thou be the Son of God, thou hast nothing to fear: for of all his servants, and much more than of Thee his Son, hath God declared that the angels are in perpetual charge. The confidence thou didst recently express was right and noble: haste then to exhibit it to the multitudes below, who, at the sight of so wondrous a sign as thy descent unhurt from this stupendous height, will at once recognize the sign from heaven they crave, and hasten to swear allegiance! It is remarkable with what exquisite subtilty the temptations are varied. As the first suggested doubts of God's providential care when *within* the path of duty, so this suggests a presumptuous reliance on that care when travelling *beyond* the path of duty. As the first appealed to the lust of the flesh, so this appeals to the pride, or as it should be rendered, the *ostentation* of life, a pride which may be felt quite as much in spiritual as in worldly things, and felt much more destructively. How many thousands have been spiritually ruined by yielding to the craving for *display*! How many thousand ministers of Christ have had their heads turned giddy by being set on the pinnacle of the temple, in the gaze of admiring multitudes, and have cast themselves down from thence into the abyss which yawns to engulf presumption! But this is but a single case of this temptation. Every risk incurred unnecessarily for the sake of exhibiting our trust in God, every unusual or

unnecessary act done merely or chiefly for the purpose of displaying our privileges or our convictions or of attracting attention and admiration, every stepping out of the plain, unadorned and *unadmired* path of simple duty, is a phase of it. For it is only *in* that path that we have the promise of the Divine Protection: and this the Tempter knew right well: for in order to conceal it he garbles the quotation from the ninety-first Psalm, with which he endeavours to persuade the Saviour into presumptuous ostentation. For the Psalmist, while enlarging on the completeness of the protection thrown by God around his people, expressly limits it to their continuance in the path of duty by the words, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee *to keep thee in all thy ways*¹. In all his ways—wheresoever duty calls, the Christian may expect the guardianship of those ministering spirits. *But no where else*: and every danger, every privation, every inconvenience even, incurred for the mere purpose of making a *display*, and exciting a *sensation*, is presumptuously tempting the Lord our God. Peculiarly subtle and dangerous is this temptation: which, instead of appealing to the sensual part of our nature, affects to sacrifice the sensual to the spiritual: instead of appealing to our secret *unbelief*, appeals apparently to the very strength and fulness of our *faith*. And hence it has often overcome precisely those who have made a certain advance in spiritual knowledge without a commensurate progress in self-knowledge and consequent humility. Every instance in which

¹ Ps. xci. 11.

extraordinary and striking means are adopted for doing that which might just as well be done in an ordinary, but less impressive way: every *display* of a confidence which goes beyond the promises, is a case of it: to enumerate all such cases would be impossible: their name is legion. And the only way to guard against seductions which are the more vigorously pressed upon us, the farther we advance in our spiritual course, is, to perceive and feel all the force and meaning of the answer with which our Saviour meets the impious suggestion: It is written, Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God.

Hitherto it would seem that the Tempter had disguised his real character. Perhaps indeed he had availed himself of the temporary power he was allowed to exercise for the purpose of inspiring his suggestions into the Redeemer's mind, as though spontaneously welling up therein: a method far more likely to make them tell than if he had confessed their parentage: a method too, in unison with that which he generally adopts, and therefore best fitted to bring the Saviour into sympathy with his tempted people. But now he throws aside concealment: and revealing himself in all his power and pomp as the monarch of this world, he seeks to dazzle the Being he could not seduce. Taking him up into an exceeding high mountain, he shews Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, "in a moment of time," as St Luke significantly adds: and says, "To thee will I give all this power and the glory of them: for to me it is committed, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou

therefore wilt prostrate thyself before me, all shall be thine¹." *How* the Devil could exhibit all the kingdoms of the world, and their magnificence, and that too in a single moment, we are not told: but that the expressions are not the less to be taken in their full extent, and that the display was commensurate with the promise by which God had pledged himself that the very ends of the earth should be the possession of his Anointed² Son, is clear. For how little tempting would have been the offer of a *part* to one to whom the *whole* was promised! How petty a bribe would have been all that could be seen with the natural eye of the land of Canaan to one whose monarchy was hereafter to embrace the world! Nor can any objection hold against this view on the score of impossibility. For the whole transaction is evidently miraculous: and the very mention by one of the Evangelists of the *glory* of the kingdoms of the world being shewed to Christ, as well as the kingdoms themselves, points to a representation to the *mental*, of what could by no possibility be shewn to the *bodily*, organ. Assuming then that the display and the offer of the Tempter was coextensive with the promises of God, and therefore embraced the whole world, let us try to realize in some degree its force. It appealed to the Saviour's consciousness of what he came to be. He came to be a *King*—a king under whose sway should ultimately be united all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them. But how much anguish awaited him before that consum-

¹ Luke iv. 6, 7.

² Ps. ii. 8.

mation ! He had a baptism to be baptized with—and he himself declared how he was straitened till it should be accomplished¹ ! Years of exactly anticipated toil and unacknowledged beneficence, years spent in vainly battling with the stubborn prejudices of his own rebellious people,—were at length to be crowned with the bitter pains of the most painful of all deaths, and with the still more bitter pains of that spiritual dereliction which was to wring the blood-sweat from his frame, and to extort the agonizing cry, “ My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ! ” And after all this had been conquered, after the Saviour had been perfected through suffering², how slow was to be the progress of his rule ! What a melancholy, what a disheartening picture must the course of this world—what a still more disheartening picture must the course of the Church from the Saviour’s time to ours have presented to the eye which pierced futurity as we know his did ! What obstinate unbelief on the part of multitudes—what hypocritical belief on the part of still greater multitudes ! What horrors enacted in the name of the Prince of Peace, and in pretended obedience to his will ! And who shall say what scenes of deceit and violence and horror are still awaiting us before that time shall come, when the whole earth shall acknowledge Christ as “ Lord and God³ ” ? And with what overwhelming force must we not suppose all this to have rushed upon the Redeemer’s soul, as he gazed in one ecstatic glance

¹ Luke xii. 50.

² Heb. ii. 10.

³ John xx. 28.

upon all the kingdoms of the world, and saw all their inward and outward glory: all the barbaric pomp and splendour of the East, and all the yet more impressive might of the conquering civilization of the West! And all this should at once be his for a single prostration to that Being who said no more than the truth when he declared that they were *his*, though he lied when he said they had been *given* to him. For he is the Prince of this world—the Spirit that has ever worked, and still works in the children of disobedience¹: and in the very anticipation of the long struggle which he knew awaited him, the Saviour must have felt how firmly rooted was his adversary's power. All this struggle—all the miseries which he himself should undergo, and all the crimes which mankind should commit ere they acknowledged him their Lord,—could now be superseded by a single act of homage. “If thou wilt bow down and worship me, ALL shall be thine!” Is it possible to conceive the overpowering force of such an offer made to such a Person! But the Saviour was not overcome by that, a mere particle of which has been sufficient to seduce the loftiest characters we meet in history: he sees in the tempting offer the unlawfulness of the condition, and at once detects the character of him who thus proposed to him *to do evil that good might come*. “Get thee behind me, Satan! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

It may seem lowering the dignity of the subject to compare a temptation so magnificent as this with any of

¹ Eph. ii. 2.

those minor seductions which nevertheless exhibit the same character, and are founded on the same principle. But the history we are examining was not intended merely to gratify an idle curiosity, nor even merely to exhibit the character of the Saviour in all its dignity. Far removed as he is from us, both in his ineffable purity and in the magnitude of the seductions by which the Devil vainly attempted it, he nevertheless bore, and still bears the same nature as we do : and in his temptations we may recognize in all essential points our own. The lust of the eye, which is the physical ground of this temptation, and the unbelief in the power and goodness of God which is its moral ground, are they not motives that act upon every one of us with more or less success ? Is not every man tempted to wish for more than he actually possesses ? and through this wish indulged without due restraint, is he not then in danger of being tempted to catch at every means for obtaining those increased possessions on which he has set his heart ? Do not most such persons delude themselves into the belief that in thus wishing to increase their property and influence, they have the very best of ends in view ? And, having once fixed this belief firmly in their minds, do they not presently become indifferent to the means in their absorbing interest in the end ? And here I speak not solely or chiefly of means which the laws prohibit—for there are comparatively few that yield to a temptation that endangers their safety or their position : I speak of means, the unlawfulness of which is only pronounced, and their adoption only punished, by the still

small voice of conscience. Is there any one here present who can say that not a single step in his rise in life was purchased by any, the least, concession to what he felt was wrong, by any, the least, abandonment of principle and of conviction? Is there any Christian who can say that in the endeavour to increase his powers for good,—the great bait which Satan held out to Jesus last, as being at once the most plausible and the most enticing,—he has never, on a single occasion, done the evil to attain the good? Yet every condescension to what is evil, however slight, for the sake of any good, however great: any compliance with what is felt to be false, although it be for the sake, as is supposed, of promoting what is true: every instance of pandering to men's prejudices, for the sake of inclining them even to what is fair and honest:—every such act, however small the actual evil, however vast the anticipated good, is an instance of the worship due to God alone being paid to God's adversary. Sublest and sharpest indeed of all temptations is this, which has been actually canonized by a large portion of Christ's Church—the temptation to do evil that good may come: the history of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, is but one long tissue of compliances with it: one long act of adoration paid to the apostate angel instead of to the Most High. And what is it that makes the history of the Church the most saddening—the most infidelity-creating of all history, but the continual recurrence and the continual victory of this temptation? From the time of that Jewish high priest who could calmly plot the death

of the Son of God, not because he thought it ~~just~~, but because he thought it *expedient* that he should die, down to the times of that Christian high priest, as he calls himself, who has just decreed a dogma¹, to be held on the penalty of eternal death for its being doubted, not because he believes it *true*, for can any one imagine that he does? but because he believes it *useful*;—what does Church history present but a long series of prostrations before the Throne of Falsehood, in order to gain the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them! And what do all these sad acts testify but that deep-seated mistrust of the power of God, to which Satan appealed when he bade Jesus fall down and worship him as the real dispenser of all earthly good, the real monarch of the world? and which too often actuates God's own servants in his very service, so that doubting or despairing of their Master's power or will, they try to enlist the power of Satan in God's cause, and in order to hasten the salvation of mankind do homage to the Devil!

We have now surveyed—imperfectly indeed, as the exigencies of time permitted—those three temptations under one or other of which all the seductions of the Evil One may be reduced,—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,—and that, not so much as they are in themselves alone, but rather as they act on and combine with that stratum of unbelief which underlies every merely human character. We have seen who was their Author in the case of Christ: and the true rendering

¹ The Immaculate Conception.

of the last clause in His own Prayer would seem to intimate that the same Being is also busy in suggesting them to every follower of Christ. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the *Evil One!*” We are indeed told by St James that it is by their own lusts men are tempted¹: but this does not exclude the co-operation of the Evil One with those lusts in which he finds his most potent allies. To the Son of God he came, but *found nothing in Him*² on which to fasten his suggestions: can we say the same of ourselves? If so, then need we not pray against being led into temptation: if Satan have already nothing in us, then need we not pray to be delivered from the Evil One. But our own consciousness of sin—our own consciousness of the difficulty of drawing nigh to that God who is yet “not far from every one of us³,” may warn us how dangerous for us must be temptation when we have within us all the lusts, however hitherto undeveloped, to which it appeals. Hence it is, that though we are called in general to imitate our Saviour, and to rejoice when we are made like unto Him, there is yet *one* point on which we can never with safety copy his example: we can never with safety venture into temptation. Though even He himself did not solicit it, though it were a part of his appointed task: for it was by the Spirit that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil: and when the hour and power of darkness arrived the second time, when the Devil, who had vainly

¹ James i. 14.

² John xiv. 30.

³ Acts xvii. 27.

endeavoured to seduce Him in the wilderness, was approaching to tempt Him again with the awful terrors of the Divine wrath upon the cross,—even He, the Redeemer of the world, the Incarnate Deity, then cried out, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!!” Thus in His own person and in His own work echoing the prayer he has prescribed to all his followers, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One!”

Utterly inscrutable to speculation is the whole subject we have been this day considering. Why God should permit any of his creatures to be tempted is a question we can no more answer than we can that question of which indeed it is but a case, why God should suffer evil to exist at all. But we know that evil does exist: and we know too that temptation does exist. That evil was first introduced into the world by a Being who goes under the name of Satan or the Adversary², we are told;—that this Being endeavoured first to seduce, and afterwards to menace our Saviour into evil, and that he is constantly engaged in tempting us as he tempted Christ, we are also told. To *deny* his influence will not *destroy* it. We cannot escape the danger by shutting our eyes against it. In matters of such moment, and so utterly beyond the province of the senses, or the discovery of reason, it is the part of rational beings to listen with reverence to what the word of God declares, and to direct our ways accordingly. Acting on this principle let us take heed to the last words of that Prayer in which our Saviour has

¹ Matt. xxvi. 39.

² 2 Cor. xi. 3.

bequeathed to us a comprehensive summary of all we ought to wish, and all we ought to fear: and as we are taught to pray for pardon and justification in the words, Forgive us our trespasses, so let us pray with equal earnestness for that preservation from sin and sanctification which can only be expected by creatures frail as we are, if we be “not led into temptation, but delivered from the Evil One !”

SERMON VIII.

CHRISTIAN ECONOMY.

JOHN vi. 12.

“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

To those who like ourselves, my brethren, are persuaded of the divine character of Him who uttered this command, it will surely not be necessary to address any argument in proof of its being worthy of being recorded by the Evangelist. Every action—every word of the Saviour becomes invested with surpassing dignity by the consideration that He is God over all, blessed for ever: and so far from deeming any one particular of those which have been preserved superfluous or trivial, we are generally rather inclined to ask why the sacred historians have been so chary of the sayings and doings of that most memorable life: why out of a series of transactions so numerous and, one might think, so severally important, so few only have been handed down in the pages of the Gospels.

But, on the other hand, the very fact that out of so many incidents so few have been preserved, proves the special importance of those incidents which have been thus distinguished: since the choice of the inspired historians must be supposed to have been determined, not by the

bias of human partiality but by the guidance of divine wisdom: and thus the gospel narratives are doubly commended to our most attentive consideration, as being not only a history of the most important Person who ever did or ever will live on this earth, but a quintessence of his history: in which nothing has been preserved but what is of greatest note and of highest instructive power.

These considerations may prepare our minds to pause with due attention on the command, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost;” as knowing that the all-wise Redeemer would never have issued this command without a very sufficient object in the first place, and that the Evangelist would never have recorded it in the second, without its having a definite and most important general bearing.

Jesus had just fed five thousand men with five barley loaves and a few small fishes: an exertion of miraculous power which of all those narrated by the Evangelists approaches most nearly to the first recorded act of Deity. For certainly there is, if not a complete identity, yet the closest resemblance between creating the universe out of no pre-existing matter, and multiplying pre-existent matter so enormously as the circumstantial details of the miracle imply. Five thousand men, besides women and children, as St Matthew tells us, had all eaten and were *filled*: and St Mark completes the impression which these words convey by adding that the disciples who were employed by the Saviour to distribute the five loaves and few small fishes, gave to the hungry multitude who had

been all day fasting in their intense eagerness of listening, *as much as they wished*. And now, all being sated, Jesus bids his disciples “gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” Now it is impossible to conceive circumstances more calculated to impress on the minds of those present the importance of the maxim, “Let nothing be lost.” Surely one who possessed the power of creating food at any moment to any conceivable extent, needed not to take such anxious care to preserve the mere crumbs from the rich man’s table,—the mere relics of that feast at which Omnipotence had evidently been the lavish entertainer. Fatigued as the disciples must have been with the mere labour of distributing to so immense a throng, why should they now be taxed with the additional, and doubtless heavier fatigue, of going about and sedulously picking up the minute and crumbled morsels that lay scattered on the grass? Such might have been, probably, the thought of thousands who had beheld the miracle, and now heard with surprise a command apparently so disproportionate to the power which had performed it. And this very apparent incongruity between the miracle and this subsequent command would stamp the command and the reason assigned for it all the deeper on their memories and hearts. Nothing could more strongly represent the sin of wastefulness than the solicitude to prevent waste thus evinced by one who had omnipotence at his command to supply want; nor could any moment have been chosen by the Saviour more forcibly to impress the duty of allowing nothing to be

lost, than the very moment after his exhibiting an opulence of creative power which might seem to render it superfluous to save. And so anxious is our Lord to enforce this duty, that He allows not the command, "Gather up the fragments that remain," to suggest its reason for itself: since other reasons might, then, have been plausibly assigned for it, as, for instance, that by the collection of the fragments He wished to evince the reality of the miracle in a more tangible and permanent manner: and doubtless the twelve baskets full of fragments that were taken up *did*, by contrast with the five loaves and few small fishes, of which they were the multiplied remains, serve to put the miracle before both the disciples and the multitude in the most impressive light; condensing, as it were, the scattered details of its performance into a focus of instantaneous observation: and accordingly, when Jesus subsequently appealed to this very miracle, in answer to the unbelieving reasonings of the disciples, he dwelt precisely on this very circumstance; asking them how many baskets full of fragments they took up, after distributing to thousands, fainting with protracted hunger, the puny provision which might hardly have sufficed themselves. But though he afterwards appealed to the fragments gathered up, as a confirmation, or perhaps I should rather say, an epitome of the miracle, the Lord had a different motive for directing them to be gathered. Not in order that their quantity might be the most palpable and striking evidence of the miracle which had been wrought, but in

order "that nothing might be lost," did He order them to be collected; thus, in fact, making the whole authority of the miracle converge upon the enforcement of the homely, but too often neglected maxim, "Waste not, want not."

Bear with me, then, for a few moments, while I endeavour to bring home to you a maxim which the Redeemer of the world disdained not to inculcate with the whole weight of a miracle, which might seem to do away with all necessity for inculcating it.

"Let nothing be lost."—That a great portion of the temporal misery which so extensively prevails is the result of sheer improvidence, will be generally acknowledged: but the misfortune is, that we are seldom disposed to act accordingly on individual occasions. For individually these occasions are so trifling, that one finds it very hard to conceive their aggregate importance. Let any one keep a record of what he spends during the year, and he will be astonished in what small, and separately trifling sums, the great bulk of his expenditure consists: how much he might have saved by avoiding expenses which, taken separately, seemed nothing at the time. Now, brethren, the pulpit is no place for the inculcation of mere worldly prudence; but the right use of money, the not allowing it to be lost in unnecessary and unprofitable expenditure, is no matter of mere worldly prudence; it is a religious duty. Money, like every other thing in this life, is a gift of God,—a talent for our use of which we shall hereafter give a strict account

to the Judge of quick and dead. Our means, like all things else, are not our own property, but God's; we are but His stewards for their administration; and we have no right to waste upon any mere idle gratification what He has entrusted to us for very different purposes. Every penny squandered upon what is useless, not to say vicious, is so much embezzled from his service. Every penny spent to no adequate good purpose brings us in guilty, not merely of the evil we may have done with it, but of the good we have omitted doing with it. Nor let any one meet me with the shallow, though plausible objection, that by the wise arrangement of God's Providence the very wastefulness of luxury is made subservient to the supply of want, by fostering trade and encouraging the arts. No doubt this is the case: and in an analogous way to this, the fragments of the miraculous feast, had they been left upon the grass, would have contributed to feed the birds and beasts, with which the desert in which this miracle took place abounded. But, just as our Lord wished that these fragments should not go to the use of inferior animals, already bounteously provided for by Him who careth ever for every sparrow, for every smallest insect that riots away its ephemeral existence in the genial sunlight, but be devoted to the higher purpose of supplying the necessities of man; even so the money which, even if spent in mere luxurious indulgence, will assuredly contribute to the support of those who live by ministering to luxury, He rather wishes should be consciously and benevolently devoted to fur-

thering the general good, in all those far more numerous and more efficient ways which true Christian benevolence, directed by Christian forethought, will infallibly devise. Nor let it be objected that, under colour of dissuading useless expenditure, I am really recommending avarice and stinginess. There is no more destructive propensity than that “love of money” which St James scruples not to call “the root of all evil;” but there is a wide difference between the avarice which loves money for its own sake, and the conscientious providence which, recognising its power for good, economises for the sake of what it may effect. There is a great difference between the miser who hoards without using, and the Christian who uses without abusing. Only consider for a moment the numerous interests that may be advanced by the means which prudence has saved for the service of our God. He that provideth not for his own family hath denied the faith, says Paul, and is worse than an infidel. And is the lavish and silly expenditure which is so often miscalled generosity, is the pomp and show and pride of life, which betrays its own intrinsic baseness and vulgarity by estimating itself and others, not by what they *are*, but by what they *have*,—is this the proper way of fulfilling this most imperative of all the duties we owe our fellow-creatures? Is the spending money on gewgaws and trinkets and clothes and equipage beyond our real station, if not above our means, is this the proper way of providing for our children, the right example for them to follow? And if they are already provided for, are our

own households the only thing on earth we have to provide for? Is the narrow circle of our own families the boundary of our allotted cares, the limit of our charity? Are we not expressly commanded to do good whilst we have time and opportunity to *all* men, specially unto them that are of the household of faith? Does not the Redeemer, by the Parable of the Good Samaritan, teach us that all whose wants, temporal or spiritual, come within our range of notice and of influence have a claim upon our purse as well as upon our prayers? And with so much destitution, so much mere temporal misery staring us in the face on every side, if we would but open our eyes to see it, can we imagine ourselves at liberty to spend on mere momentary selfish unnecessary gratification the sums which, however separately trifling, will when reckoned up astonish us by their collective magnitude, and may well appal us by the magnitude of good they might have effected if properly employed? Can we imagine that the unrelieved wretchedness of our fellow-creatures will not cry from the ground against us to the God who judgeth the cause of the poor, and who abhors the high looks and the unfeeling sensuality of the ungodly rich? And when we consider further that bodily misery is too generally the faithful index of spiritual dereliction; that the poor whom we might have relieved by the mere retrenchment of superfluous display are too frequently condemned, by the lack of the bread that perisheth, to a famine of the bread of life; that poverty, when carried beyond a certain limit, directly tends not only to deprive

them of the blessed privileges which we enjoy, alas ! with such easy unthankful carelessness, but to sink them below the feelings and practices, as well as below the privileges of Christians, in what language shall we venture to characterize, were it even but the improvidence which allows that money to be wasted, always without benefit, often to our actual detriment, which, had it been judiciously employed, might have saved many and many a poor family from the slough of helpless, hopeless, brutalizing degradation !

But if on the one hand, the rich often transgress the spirit of my text by systematic wastefulness, so do the poor on the other hand as frequently transgress it by want of systematic carefulness. Those who have but little money, are on that very account prone to think little of money : and instances of reckless improvidence amongst the poor have often come under my own notice which have fairly excited my amazement. It is of course impossible to follow this subject into detail : but I would earnestly recommend the very poorest here to watch narrowly his expenditure : to gather up most carefully the smallest fragments that remain, that nothing, however trifling, be lost ; and he may be assured that exact economy, pursued not from the grovelling instinct of avarice, but from a conviction of the grievous sin of wastefulness, will save him many and many a shilling, aye, and many and many a pound, for useful purposes, which he now fritters away without either advantage or enjoyment. Look at the stately edifices which our Romish

brethren have everywhere reared throughout the country : what is the main source of all this lavish expenditure ? Whose money clothes and feeds that numerous priesthood who in this very town are continually increasing ; whose money arrays them in vestments stiff with gold and gorgeous with purple and fine linen ? It is the money, generally speaking, of the very poorest of the poor : the fragments saved from the most curtailed repast that work all these wonders : that raise up temples capable of accommodating thousands, and fill them with all the seductions of incense and music, and all the other things prescribed by the sumptuous ritual of Rome ! And what do *our* poor in comparison ? *We* have no churches to rear as *they* have—hardly can we bring ourselves to keep our churches in repair—*we* have no ministry entirely living on our voluntary contributions as *they* have ; *we* have no pompous and expensive ritual to maintain as *they* have ; what then do our poor with the fragments which they have at least in quite as great abundance as their Romish brethren ? In what way do they devote them to the glory of their God, the service of their Redeemer ? What efforts at home, what missions abroad attest the enlightened zeal of their more reasonable service ? Alas ! did we not know what great things others contrive to do with the small fragments that remain, how carefully they gather them up for so far inferior purposes, we might be tempted to consider such questions as a shameless mockery,—a heartless exposure of the want and misery of our poorer brethren !

But *money*, my brethren, is only one of the many gifts for the right use of which we are responsible to the gracious Giver of all good: only one of the many talents with which our Master bids us occupy until He come. To specify them all would be impossible: health, strength, abilities, influence, station in society, connexions,—all these are precious endowments not one fragment of which should be suffered to be lost to the great purpose of existence—the doing good to men, the spreading our Redeemer's kingdom. But there is *one* gift which is beyond them all in importance, because it is the condition necessary to their exercise. Granted to all the living on terms of exact equality during its continuance, but of whose continuance not one of all the living can be one moment sure, the irrevocable opportunity of irreversible decision for eternity—*time* is the most momentous, the most valuable of all possessions. And if to every other talent entrusted to our charge the command in my text may be not unsuitably accommodated, of time the words “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost” may be used not merely by way of accommodation in their spirit, but by way of direct application in their very letter. For only in fragments is time really at our disposal. We cannot handle it or deal with it in masses as we can with money. And though in itself continuous and uninterrupted, yet is it only discontinuous and unconnected portions of it that we have for any single purpose. Let any one set himself to count the seconds of a single hour, and to what an interminable length will not that hour

seem to extend itself! A day contains twenty-four such hours: but this period, which, when considered as a sequence of more than eighty thousand seconds, might seem to stretch before us in endless vista of progression, is broken up and frittered away by an immense variety of necessary but trivial acts: food, sleep, and relaxation actually demand its greater portion: and the higher we mount in the scale of occupation, the less continuous do we find that occupation becomes during the time devoted to it. Common handicrafts may indeed be carried on for hours with little apparent interruption; though even in these we shall on closer examination find that the time bestowed on them is not bestowed in unbroken continuity, but in a very fragmentary way. But when leaving them we ascend to the labours of the mind, what a humiliating spectacle presents itself! How difficult it is to keep up any regular train of thought those only know who have tried. Constantly is the mind starting aside like "a deceitful bow," suggesting interruptions from within, or eagerly admitting them from without. The strongest exertion of the strongest will can alone compel continuous attention, and the powers not merely of the mind but of the body soon sink exhausted under the effort. Of time therefore we may say with the most perfect propriety, that the grand secret of employing it aright is the gathering up of its fragments: the economizing each scattered moment: the determining not to be discouraged by not having much continuous time at our disposal, but to snatch each instant we can com-

mand for some useful purpose. And he who is determined not to let a moment go to waste may effect far more by the resolute using up of scattered and unconnected moments than others could effect by continuous exertion pursued only when continuous exertion was possible. There is a man now living who in the intervals of occupation at the smithy acquired a knowledge of more than a dozen languages. Some of the best scientific books that have been ever written have been written in moments uncertainly snatched at all times of the day from various and most interruptive medical practice. And to go to higher instances than these; the labours of the great Apostle, who laboured more than all the rest and had the care of all the Churches, were pursued in the intervals of a handicraft. Such have been, such may be the splendid fruits of stray fragments carefully gathered up in obedience to the divine command, which wills that none of them be lost; for them that honour Him by doing His bidding the Lord will honour by prospering their work; whilst on the other hand they that despise Him by neglecting to do His will in this respect also, shall be lightly esteemed; their very negligence shall become their punishment. Few things indeed are more conducive to unhappiness than waste of time; witness the discontented *ennui* among the rich, the sullen listlessness among the poor, which at once attests and avenges it. How laborious an occupation do not the former often find it to kill the time which now hangs heavy on their hands, and whose murder shall

hereafter hang heavy on their souls ! And how faithfully does God in his great mercy warn them by present discomfort of the future misery they are entailing on themselves ! when all the irrevocable moments in which untold good might have been effected by merely that amount of activity which is necessary even to health and comfort shall rise in long array before the tortured mind, each as it passes inflicting its stab upon the memory, and tantalizing the imagination with the remorseful representation of all its possible consequences of happiness, now for ever lost ! Nor are the poor less conspicuously warned to redeem the time which they cannot retrieve. The spare moments, which had they been devoted to any, no matter what, useful purpose, might have raised the man in the scale of society and have enabled him to be a blessing to his family and his neighbours, will, if unemployed, produce a rank crop of various mischief. Thorns and thistles will teem in the neglected field and exhaust the soil which if duly cultivated might have brought forth rich harvests. Domestic discomfort will soon ensue from the want of domestic occupation ; the slouching listlessness of the master of the family when he returns from work will soon repeat itself in the style of his wife and children, because it will teach them to regard work as a necessary evil to be eschewed as far as possible, and time as given only to be wasted after the mere animal wants are satisfied. Discomfort at home will recommend dissipation abroad : the dram-shop will be resorted to for the stimulus which cheerful and useful occupation would far better

give, and this fatal stimulus will soon drain the wages it incapacitates for earning : the pawn-shop is the next resource, and one by one, all the decent comforts of former days are sacrificed to the insatiable craving for excitement : lower and lower the wretched family sink in the scale of debasement till—but I will not pursue the repulsive subject farther. Repulsive however as it is, this is no fancy picture ; there are thousands and tens of thousands in all our large towns who can trace their ruin to the habit which a dying man once told me had been his perdition—the habit of drinking when work was over in order *to kill time!*

There is yet one farther application of the Text I would press on your most earnest attention. Valuable as are money and time as the means and conditions of doing incalculable good, there is one thing still more valuable, without which we should know how to apply neither money nor time aright : a thing within the reach of all here present, and which perhaps on that very account is undervalued by us all—I mean the opportunities of religious instruction and religious fellowship which we enjoy. Every other gift of God is but an indirect means to the great end of our existence—the promotion of his glory, and the salvation of our souls : but the ordinances of God's house, the assembling ourselves together for united prayer and praise, for hearing his holy word and for receiving the emblems and effectual pledges of the Redeemer's love—these, brethren, are direct means for the attainment of that end : or rather, they are the *only*

direct means, since they are the conditions of our union with the Saviour, the channels of his grace. Let no one imagine that in thus speaking I am disparaging private meditation and devotion, the reading our Bible at home and praying to our heavenly Father in our closets. This is indeed a most essential part of our duty; but it is not *all* our duty; and I will venture to say that this portion of it cannot be discharged aright without the other: that private devotion cannot be acceptable except when it is based on the habit of attending public and united worship. I have often heard people talk of reading God's Word at home as a reason why they might dispense with going to church. But this very excuse only proved how little they had understood or profited by what they read. The duty of frequenting public worship is indeed urged in Scripture on far stronger grounds than is commonly imagined. Turn to the 10th chap. of Hebrews, the 25th and following verses, and you will find that the Apostle there connects that perseverance in wilful and habitual sin for which there is no forgiveness, precisely with that carelessness about divine things which begins in men's absenting themselves from the ordinances of God's house, and against which he therefore most solemnly warns his readers. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin habitually and wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful

looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord: and again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Mark how this passage—a passage which may well make any one not yet wholly hardened or desperately thoughtless quail at the thought of allowing himself in the practice of known sin—mark, I say, how this passage most clearly connects that fearful state with the neglecting to assemble ourselves together; the intention of the Apostle plainly being to shew that if we yield to the carelessness and pride which are the real though unacknowledged causes of such neglect, we shall inevitably fall into that habitual depravity which consists not merely, observe, in a course of wilful external profligacy, but in a course of contempt of Christ and of the Holy Spirit: and he therefore warns them against that contempt of Christ's ordinances which is the first step towards despising Christ himself. And certainly if I may appeal to my own experience, I have ever found that where there was declension of the religious life, there there was always neglect of religious ordinances: and that the first symptom of the

disease which has perhaps ended in the death of the soul was a less frequent attendance at the house of God. Nor indeed can carelessness in this respect be otherwise than fatal if not checked in time. For when God has appointed certain means of grace it is sheer presumption in man to pronounce these means unnecessary; and to worship Him otherwise than He has prescribed, whether by addition, as do the Romanists in adding Sacraments to those ordained by Christ, or by omission, as do those who neglect the Sacraments ordained by Christ and the assembly of the faithful, is to repeat the sin of Nadab and Abihu: who, for offering strange fire, and thus taking on them to innovate on God's commands, and to infringe on His appointed mode of worship, were struck dead at the very altar. Now everything in the New Testament speaks the necessity of united worship, not merely as something expedient, but as something essential. The promise of Christ's presence is given to those who are *assembled* in His name: the promise of Christ's answering prayer is not given unconditionally, save to a body of his followers, however small, who *agree* together touching any thing that they shall ask. The Sacrament of Christ's body and blood in its very essence requires a congregation, because as Paul declares, "the bread we break is the common and united participation of the body of Christ; the cup of blessing which we bless the common and united participation of his blood¹." Accordingly, the Acts of the Apostles state as the very first evidence

¹ 1 Cor. x. 17, 16.

of the spirit of the first converts, that “they were together¹,” by which is doubtless meant their assiduity in holding Christian meetings, that “they continued daily in the temple with one accord;” and constantly allude to Christian assemblies as meeting on the first day of the week to break bread, thus at once commemorating the death of Christ and his Resurrection; whilst the Epistles of Paul contain minute directions about these assemblies, and were themselves intended, as one of them explicitly declares, to be read in the assembly to all the holy brethren²: that those who could not hear the apostle speaking to them by word of mouth, as was his wont when present, might hear him by letter when absent. And some of these epistles, as for instance, the epistle to the Romans and that to the Ephesians, have almost the form, as they have all the unity of purpose, of a sermon. The very terms in which Paul pronounces his parting benediction on his Corinthian converts intimate that that union of believers which is both expressed and promoted by united worship, is the condition of their highest privilege: for when he prays that the communion of the Holy Ghost may be with them he uses the same words which he elsewhere employs to denote the common and united participation of the Sacrament: insomuch that the benediction might more properly be rendered, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the common and united participation of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” And most remarkably is this benediction

¹ Acts ii. 44, and following verses.

² 1 Thess. v. 27.

commented on by the words of the same apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 13, where he says, “ For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit ;” in which passage you will observe he speaks of *two* operations of the Spirit ; the first that by which He unites us to Christ’s body, and the second that by which He gives himself in one common draught, (to vary the words, not the import of the apostle’s metaphor) to all the members of that body : which plainly indicates that not as mere isolated individuals but only as members of one corporate body, and therefore united with each other in common privileges and common acts, can we hope for the Spirit’s influences. In short, the whole analogy of the New Testament declares that only in so far as we have that union with each other through Christ our Head, of which united worship is the necessary expression and the best promotive, can we hope for the blessings it holds out. Nor is individual experience the only test of this truth. The experience, the sad experience of Christendom at large, proves the absolute necessity of public and united worship. What was it checked and ultimately extinguished pure religion in Italy and Spain ? The *Inquisition* could not reach the secrets of the heart—but it could prevent the exercise of Christian fellowship ; it could hinder them that loved the Lord from assembling themselves together, and exhorting one another ; and true religion died out in a single generation. What was it that destroyed the Reformation in

Austria and Bohemia, countries in which at one time the majority of the population are supposed to have been Protestant? Not the extirpation of all these heretics by fire and sword, however well the authorities might have been inclined to it—for their numbers made that impossible; but the absolute prohibition of their holding any united worship. This privilege, which millions vainly pined for in former days, and to obtain which thousands left their home and all their property and went into a strange land: this privilege, the denial of which has involved whole nations in gross darkness ever since, and stifled true religion in the half of Europe;—this inestimable privilege we at present have to the fullest possible extent; and how do we use it? Are we even contented *to sit down at the feast* mere *fragments* of which would have been a rich repast to millions of our fellow-creatures formerly? Or do we perhaps require the discipline of persecution, the stimulus of a famine of the preached Word of God, to induce us to gather up the fragments that may then remain to us of formerly unvalued blessings? Are we here too to be taught the sinfulness of waste by experiencing the misery of want?

But, brethren, I would not merely take occasion from my text to exhort you to a more constant and regular attendance at those ordinances which, as *we* have them, cannot be denominated *fragments*: nor would I, from the very circumstance that the words of my text have become inapplicable in consequence of the richness and abundance of our privileges, merely exhort you to be thankful

to the all-bounteous Giver of those mercies, and by a diligent use of them to enforce the prayer which every Lord's Day you put up, "that you being hurt by no persecutions may evermore serve him in his holy Church :" I would exhort you not merely to *attend*, but so to attend as to lose nothing you can possibly preserve. There is a wide difference between mere regular attendance and profitable attendance. We may go to church Sunday after Sunday, and bring away with us little or nothing. And to this point I would call your final attention.

Preaching is one of God's ordinances, designed for the explaining and enforcing his holy word : and the wisdom of this ordinance may be perceived by considering the immense diversity of minds and the importance of presenting truth under different aspects. Now this is effectually attained by Sermons. There is hardly a single sermon preached from which one may not gather something which, but for that particular sermon, he would not have seen : every single discourse will certainly yield at least fragments that ought not to be lost. Every different exhibition of the truth multiplies its points of contact with different minds. And thus the very diversities of gifts which Paul acknowledges are directly serviceable, provided they be all informed with the same Spirit ; because they produce diversities of operations suited to the diversities of character. Even Scripture attests the diversity of the various holy men who wrote under the guidance of one and the selfsame Spirit : and shews that He divided unto each severally as he would. And thus,

while all Scripture is profitable unto all, it is profitable in various degrees in its various parts to each. To some the glowing zeal, the triumphant logic of Paul are peculiarly suited: others find rest to their souls in the simple depth and profound tranquillity of John. But as it is incumbent on us not to confine ourselves to those portions of Scripture which are most congenial to ourselves, but rather to enlarge our spiritual apprehension by ranging through the treasures of Divine wisdom so lavishly poured forth in so many different forms, so is it our duty to listen reverently and attentively to whatever we hear in the house of God, not insisting on a uniformity of manner or of matter, which might do harm instead of good; but prepared to accept Divine truth in whatever shape it be presented, and to gather up each fragment of what is too precious to be lost.

Above all, let me recommend you, when you go home, not to let the subject of the sermon be instantly superseded in your minds by worldly thoughts and cares, or by frivolous and trifling conversation. It is lamentable to see people who have apparently attended during service, immediately afterwards discarding what they have heard, as though it had no meaning or bearing on them save while they were in church. It is perhaps seldom the case indeed that the whole of a discourse, however lucid its arrangement, and however forcible its expression, can be carried away in the memory for future reference: but something may almost always be retained which may suggest profitable meditation during the ensuing week.

And any habit that militates against our doing this tends to spiritual wastefulness, and violates in spiritual things the command which surely applies to them in a far higher degree than it does to temporal things, “ Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

Treasure then, my brethren, in your minds and hearts whatever you hear in this sacred place agreeable to God’s word: let no opportunity of gaining instruction and edification go to loss: be diligent in coming to the house of God—be diligent in listening to the word of God—be diligent in recollecting every explanation, every application of that word: and be assured that if you do so hear and mark, you will also learn and inwardly digest: and that one sermon, the most commonplace soever, thus attended to from the deep conviction that the smallest atom of Divine truth it may contain is too valuable to be lost, will do you more good than hundreds of the most eloquent discourses heard but to be admired and then immediately forgotten.

S E R M O N IX.

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

MATT. XXV. 13.

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

THESE words of solemn warning, my brethren, were addressed by our blessed Lord to his disciples on an occasion equally solemn. Seated on the summit of the mount of Olives, in the midst of the faithful few who had left their all to follow him, He was gazing on the rebellious city which was so soon to crucify its King—on the temple which He was never again to enter. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!” With this mournful valediction He had just quitted the spot where in his infancy He had been received into the arms of the aged Simeon: where in his childhood He had astonished the teachers of the law by his understanding and his answers: and where He had subsequently spent so many hours during his brief ministry endeavouring to soften the stubborn wills and to open the benighted eyes of his people, but alas! in vain! they would not come to him that they might have life! But now He had quitted it for ever—“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!”

Struck with the mournful solemnity of this farewell his disciples gathered round him as He went forth from the temple, and one of them, speaking in the name of the rest, called his attention to the magnificence of the structure, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" As though inviting Jesus to revoke, if possible, words which must have struck cold to the heart of Israelites, who loved and venerated beyond all other places the place where God's honour dwelt! But what calm sternness is there not in the Saviour's answer to this appeal! "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down!" Total destruction! Not even a ruin left of all that gorgeous palace of the Most High! No wonder that the disciples imagined that their Master was speaking of the end of all things, when He thus announced the demolition of the sanctuary where alone God might be propitiated for the sins of men: the sanctuary which had been reared by kings, and the surpassing glories of which had been sung by prophets: no wonder that in their anxious question they coupled together two events, which to a Jew must have seemed almost necessarily connected: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" And, indeed, these two events, however widely separated in time, are most closely united in principle: for as the demolition of the temple terminated the first dispensation, so the end of the world is but the termination of the second: as the ruins of the temple buried the law, so the ruins of

the world shall bury the Gospel: and as God's vengeance on his rebellious people served more effectually to instal the Gospel kingdom of faith and hope and love, so shall his wider vengeance on a rebellious world instal that better kingdom, in which faith and hope shall be lost in the full satisfaction of actual enjoyment, and love alone remain. Accordingly our Lord in answering this compound question of his disciples, so far from separating what they had joined, himself embraces in one view the scenery of both events: throughout the remarkable prophecy which he delivered on this occasion, and which is recorded in the 24th chapter of St Matthew, the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world are inseparably intermingled: and whilst the fearful portents which actually accompanied that memorable sign, the horrors which signalized the outpouring of God's wrath on the doomed city, are pourtrayed with vivid accuracy, we cannot but recognize that the representation, as a whole, is far too gigantic to have been yet fulfilled: that it requires the universe for its scene: the day of judgment for the fulness of its time.

The intrinsic similarity of the two events might not however suffice to account for our Lord's thus uniting them in one indissoluble tenor of prophetic warning, were it not connected with the peculiar mode in which futurity seems to have been revealed to the prophetic mind. This mode is clearly indicated by the title which originally was the only one applied to prophets: for as we learn from 1 Sam. ix. 9, "he that is now called a Prophet was

beforetime called a *Seer*." Now this title *seer* indicates *seeing, beholding, mental vision*, as the mode in which future events were made known: and this inference is confirmed beyond all reasonable doubt by the circumstance that of all the titles given to prophets in the sacred language the title *seer* is the only one which bears upon the *mode* in which futurity was revealed, or indeed upon the revelation of futurity at all: for the other name, which we translate *prophet*¹, means nothing more than *preacher*, and relates exclusively to that function of the prophets whereby they were the instructors of the people, preachers of righteousness, without implying any disclosures of futurity whatever. Hence we may gather that the chief, if not the only method by which God signified to his servants those things that should shortly come to pass was by *causing them to behold them in vision*: it was not the dull and tedious narrative of a chronological succession, but the vivid and instantaneous impression of a *picture*, in which would naturally be grouped together in immediate juxtaposition all events connected with each other by a common origin or by similarity of principle. And this view is strongly corroborated by the light it throws upon those numerous passages in the prophets of the Old Testament in which we find the first and second coming of our Lord brought into immediate contact: his second advent in his glorious majesty appearing to be the instantaneous result of his first advent in great humility: for though the two events

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might be separated by thousands of years in *time*, nevertheless as parts of one great whole they would necessarily be united in the picture which passed before the prophet's eye: the vision on which he gazed took no note of time: but presented together those facts which existed together in the counsels of God before time was. And now, applying this view of prophetic foreknowledge to the remarkable prophecy recorded in the 24th chapter of St Matthew, we perceive that our Lord unites inseparably the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the world, not only on account of that intrinsic similarity which makes the one a type of the other, but also because to his prophetic mind the two events presented themselves as component parts of one grand picture, the whole of which was comprehended in one glance.

It cannot fail to strike you how much this view of prophetic foreknowledge, according to which it is a picture seen by the prophet rather than a history narrated to him, is confirmed by our Lord's own words, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only :" and again by his still more general declaration, " It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power :" importing as do both these sayings, and more especially the last, that though things future may be revealed to men, yet the times of their fulfilment, and consequently their relative distances from each other, are not intended to be revealed: and it is obvious that no means of revealing futurity could more perfectly make

known *events* without divulging *times* than the method of *vision*: in which events should either be grouped together into one complete picture, or pass successively before the prophet's gaze as in those views in which one scene melts and dissolves into another by gradual and imperceptible transition. And this last analogy holds good nowhere more than in that prophecy on which is based my Text. The transition, if transition there be, from the one event to the other, from the destruction of the temple to the destruction of the world, is so imperceptible that those who lived in the first ages of the Church might well be pardoned if they expected the immediate Advent of their Lord to judge the quick and dead.

It is possible that this view of prophecy may seem to some of you degrading, inasmuch as it strips it of that chronological accuracy which marks the annals of the past. You may possibly feel inclined to reject it because it seems to rob prophetic foreknowledge of its perfection. And unquestionably it does deprive it of that absolute perfection which we in our fond conceit might deem essential to it. But perfection is *relative* as well as *absolute*: that which in itself is imperfect, may yet be perfect with reference to the purpose for which it was designed. And thus the foreknowledge of prophecy, imperfect in itself, is perfect with reference to us and our real wants. Its object is not to gratify an idle curiosity by communicating information which would certainly be useless, and would probably be dangerous, but to disclose the principles which this world's jarring course

is nevertheless working out under the all-controlling supremacy of its real though unseen monarch : in order thereby to arm us against discouragement on the one hand, and to warn us against a careless and fatal acquiescence on the other. It is not meant to swell the hoard of our knowledge, but to increase the treasure of our wisdom. Had the prophecy been made perfect in itself, by disclosing the exact time of the great events it predicts, by declaring the precise term of years that was to elapse between Christ's first and second comings, where would have been its perfection relatively to us, and to our benefit ? Would such precise foreknowledge have tended to increase that vigilance which, even with all the stimulus of uncertainty, we yet find it so difficult to practise ? We know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh—do we then find it so easy to maintain that frame of mind and that conduct of life in which we should each wish to be found at his coming, that we could afford to dispense with such an incentive to faithfulness as our absolute ignorance of that day and hour may supply ? And can we imagine that what all the tremendous grandeur which invests the coming of the Judge, coupled with all the reiterated warnings of the unexpected suddenness of his coming, too often fails to effect,—can we imagine that this should be effected by the assurance that not before such a day need that catastrophe be expected : that until then we might eat, drink, and be merry ? Is it not plain that such prophecy would but authorize license, and give

tenfold strength to that lethargy of sensual habit which is the great foe to all serious reflection? And as for ages it would encourage men to live after their own lusts, so would it for the few years immediately preceding the predicted day paralyze the whole social system. As the time approached, mankind, even the most vauntingly unbelieving, would become gradually absorbed in breathless expectation. All business would be suspended, or if carried on at all, would be carried on with fitful and spasmodic effort. As the day drew nearer and ever nearer, expectation would rise to agony: the best and most devoted Christians would be excited beyond all Christian sobriety, whilst the mass of mankind would be goaded by the gradual resistless lapse of the few well counted moments left into absolute frenzy. Think, my brethren, if you were now to be assured by a voice from heaven that the very next Lord's day should dawn into that great and terrible day of the Lord which shall end in heaven or in hell—what would be your sensations as each hour glided on to the fatal term! Untouched by the mercifully numbing power of disease which softens the great change to the dying, in full possession of your faculties, and knowing the very instant of your doom, with what maddening anxiety would you not feel the loss of each irrevocable minute,—how readily would you not give the whole world, if possible, to redeem one of the many hours you have wasted! The wretch who knows that on such a day, at such an hour, he shall be led forth to *die*,—what his feelings must be as the days

wane onwards to the last, God forbid we should ever experience ! Imagine then, if you can, his misery reproduced in every human being—nay, far more than reproduced, for what he awaits is death—but what mankind would in such a case await would be, not death, but all that makes death terrible,—the trump of God—the great white Throne—the Judge before whose face heaven and earth shall flee away !

We therefore cannot but regard the declared uncertainty of prophecy as to *time*, coupled with its assured certainty of *event*, as a wise and merciful provision of the Almighty by which an apparent imperfection is designed for our real good : the warning being thus dispersed throughout all ages, and operating (in some degree) upon all generations, instead of being concentrated into a few years of mortal agony to compensate centuries of absolute indifference. And surely to every thoughtful mind this must be a strong corroboration of the divine authority of Him who delivered these prophecies, and of the book in which they are recorded. For the wisdom of concealing the exact time would be a consideration of no moment whatever to an impostor, anxious to gain credit by pretending to foretell things future, whilst on the other hand, his interest would obviously lead him to make his alleged disclosures of futurity as particular and special as the natural curiosity of man would wish or his notions of perfect foreknowledge might deem requisite. So that the very circumstance that our Lord thus repeatedly warns us, that we know neither the day nor the hour of

his coming, not only bears the evident stamp of divine wisdom in thus providing for our real wants in opposition to our unruly wishes, but also vouches for the divine authority of Him who thus disdained increasing his influence over his followers at the expense of their true interest.

And now, my brethren, having seen that the *chronological indifference* (if I may so call it) of prophecy is sufficiently explained by the way in which futurity was disclosed to the mind of the *seer*, the way of *pictured vision* rather than of *historical narration*; having further seen that it is not only justified but actually required by the true wants of those for whose benefit all prophecy was given; and having lastly seen how powerful because how unsuspecting a testimony to the divine origin of the Christian prophecies is yielded by this their exquisite adaptation to man's real good at the expense of slighting those powerful inclinations to pry into future times and seasons to which imposture would have been glad to pander,—having thus seen cause to adore the wisdom and the truth of Him who assures us that it is not for us to know the times and the seasons, let us proceed to examine the brief but comprehensive command which He grounds on this our ignorance.

“*Watch.*” “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

Brief as is this command, it is nevertheless the keynote both of the prophecy at which we have been glancing and of the parables which follow that prophecy. As

the prophecy was intended to enforce it, so the parables are designed to explain it. To the first of these latter we confine our attention for the present.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them their meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” (St Matthew xxiv. 45, 46.)

Christ’s followers, left in this world without the support and without the check of His visible superintendence, are here compared with the family of some wealthy man during the master’s temporary and uncertain absence. The watchfulness of a domestic left in charge of the establishment under such circumstances would obviously be proved, not by continually running to the door to look for his master’s return, but by punctually fulfilling those duties which belonged to his place: by acting in all respects during his master’s absence as he would act under his immediate eye. In a word, his watchfulness would consist not so much in *expectation* as in *fidelity*. Nay more, all such expectation of his lord’s return as would interfere with his fidelity, all such expectation as would engross his mind and prevent his attending to his proper business, so far from being praiseworthy would be positively mischievous. All this the illustration of itself implies. But our Lord and Master is not satisfied to let it thus speak for itself: as if foreseeing the rise at some future period of the dangerous illusion that mere expectation, mere waiting, mere *hearkening* for the sound of

the last trump suffices to constitute watchfulness, so that all effort, all activity is absorbed in the torpor of pious contemplation,—as if, I say, our Lord foreseeing this had determined to guard against it even in those very exhortations which have been most quoted in support of it, he expressly defines the watchfulness he recommends: “blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find”—doing what? looking out at the casement and straining his eyes to catch the distant signs of his lord’s approach? impatiently asking, “why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” No: but doing that for which his master placed him over the family: giving to every one his meat in due season: administering and controlling the household in the same decent order and abundance which would prevail were the master himself at home: “blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find *so* doing.”

All such expectation therefore of Christ’s coming as *ends in itself*, so far from being sanctioned, is positively condemned by Christ. Its unfruitfulness alone would decide against it: a religion so eminently practical as ours could never recommend a state of mind barren of all practical results. Yet such is the deceitfulness of the human heart that there are numbers who really imagine that they are waiting for their Lord, watching as He would have them watch, either because they are in momentary expectation of his coming, or because in defiance of his own express declaration, they are wasting the precious moments in laboriously calculating those times and

seasons which it is not for them to know. And therefore He who knew what was in man, aware that man's natural slothfulness would powerfully recommend an idle expectancy in place of that incessant activity which constitutes true watchfulness, more especially as by yielding to it men might gratify their passion for speculation as well as their indolence,—Jesus knowing our natural bias, would not leave his parable to explain itself, but explains it for us with a clearness which may defy the most prejudiced understanding to mistake or pervert: having enjoined on us *to watch*, because we know neither the day nor the hour of his coming, and having illustrated the watchfulness He enjoins by the example of a steward's constant active care for the household during the master's absence, he finally applies this example to his injunction with a precision which defies misunderstanding: “Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing;”—watching as that faithful and wise servant watched, by giving the household their meat in due season.

Christian watchfulness then consists not in *speculation* but in *practice*—not in *contemplation* but in *action*.

But this general principle by no means exhausts the meaning of the Parable. Every man stands in a three-fold relation: to his fellow-man, to himself, and to God. Accordingly, the several duties which arise from these several relations have been separately illustrated by our Lord in three Parables: the connecting link of which is that universal authority of Christ as the Sovereign of this

world which binds together these threefold duties in the bond of one common responsibility to Him who is at once our Saviour, our Ruler, and our Judge. Deferring to another opportunity the investigation of the Parables of the Ten Virgins and of the Talents, which respectively set forth the duties we owe to ourselves and those we owe to our God, we cannot but perceive that the Parable we are now considering illustrates those duties which result from the particular stations in life to which God has called us; those duties which we owe to our fellow-men in consequence of the mutual dependency of mankind.

All men are Christ's subjects, loyal or rebellious: all professed Christians are Christ's more immediate servants, faithful or unfaithful. Consequently there is a closer bond of union between Christians as such than between men in general. Accordingly, to exemplify the closeness of this relation, our Lord chooses not the wider scope of *national*, but the endearing and intimate connection of *domestic* union: He appears in this parable not as a king, but as the head of a family: his kingdom shrinks into a household. Agreeably to this reduced scale of representation, one of the servants is selected by the master to be set over the rest and to provide for their wants: the consistency of the comparison requiring that those duties which devolve upon us all with regard to our dependents or connections, should be thus represented in an isolated form, as a charge committed to a single individual. To guard, however, against the misconcep-

tion which might arise from this isolated example, as though there were only one faithful and wise servant to be appointed ruler over Christ's family, our Lord introduces this isolated character with a question, *Who is a faithful and wise servant whom his lord hath placed over his household, to give them meat in due season?* aiming thereby to impress upon each of his hearers that it might be himself that was meant: to induce every one for himself to ask, *Lord, is it I?* Does not the position in which my Master has placed me, of rule, or authority, or influence over others, prove that I am that very servant? In fact, there is perhaps not one here who may not consider himself as specially intended: for whether in the common connections of life, as landlords, employers, masters, or in the more intimate bonds of the family, as husbands and parents, or in the less definite though hardly less influential intercourse of society in the way of friendship, or business, or amusement, we *all* have more or less influence: and it is important beyond all things that we should know and feel that to our common Master Christ we are directly responsible for the exercise of this influence. For we not merely possess it, but in the nature of things we cannot help continually exerting it: power for good or for evil is constantly streaming forth from every one of us, throughout all the ramifications of our social existence. And as nature belies the selfish principle, "Every man for himself," so does Christianity disown that viler modification of it which would destroy the very essence of the Church by saying, "Every

Christian for himself :" our Lord and his apostles vary the figures they use to express our mutual connection, as if no single emblem would suffice to shadow forth its intimacy : and though throughout the preceptive parts of the New Testament the duties which depend on that connection are sedulously inculcated in their chief branches, there is, perhaps, no passage which gives so marked a view of the extent of our mutual responsibility as this Parable, in which, to prevent the feeling of individual responsibility being lost in the crowd, and swallowed up in the generalities of a class, our Lord embodies in one individual the duties which devolve on us all, and points us to his isolated case with a question which ought to bring home to every soul the conviction "*I am the man.*"

Yes, my brethren, every Christian is in the strictest sense of the word "*his brother's keeper:*" appointed by Christ to give sustenance to his dependents and connections : to see to it that they want no good thing with which he can supply them, whether for the body or the soul.

Let us apply this principle to some of those concerns of daily life which are too seldom touched on in the pulpit.

It is too much the habit of the day to treat those whom Providence has placed under us in the capacity of servants, or workmen, or dependents, with the unfeeling indifference with which we would use so many machines: to consider wages as merely a commercial question, satisfied with ourselves if we do not lower them beyond the market average. Nor do the bad results of this heartless

system always appear immediately; when the general rate is high, distress does not ensue. But even in that case, men are well aware of the spirit of their employers: and how can they feel any affection or interest for those who obviously care not for them, and, if they pay them well, only do so because they must? Even in the most flourishing circumstances this want of sympathy between employers and employed menaces the dissolution of society. But what shall we say of the cruelty of those who employ without sustaining, who exact work without giving food, or who rigorously calculate the extreme limit of human endurance in order that they may just keep within its verge? What shall we say of the thoughtless but not less real cruelty of those who reduce another person to be the hateful engine of their oppressions: themselves screened by his intervention from the sight of the miseries they are causing: who in their eagerness for cheap luxuries, never dream of the incalculable wretchedness of those who have to toil in making them at constantly diminished wages: what shall we say of those whose parsimonious extravagance is thus continually lessening the already scanty earnings of the poor? They are Christ's stewards for their wealth—appointed to give their dependents, mediate or immediate, proper sustenance in due season: what does Christ then say of those who thus insolently disregard or abuse the trust committed to them? “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants and to eat and drink

with the drunken"—(mark, my brethren, with what profound truth our Saviour here couples oppression with *sensuality*—for it is generally to get ampler means of sensual indulgence that we oppress the poor)—“the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For what are they but hypocrites, who talk of loving God and yet love not their brother? who can kneel in Church and beseech God “to have mercy upon all men¹,” and yet never dream in their selfish extravagance of shewing mercy to any: what are they but hypocrites, who can pray for daily bread, whilst they are wringing superfluous luxuries from the miseries of their dependents? But if that hypocrisy be hateful in the sight of God which grinds the faces of the poor to supply its own insatiate cravings, and which, alleging the hard times and the necessities of trade in excuse, readily finds favour with the indulgent world for all its base oppressiveness, how much more hateful must be the hypocrisy which extends its blighting influence over the soul of its unhappy victims! which, though possessed of a barrel of meal that can never waste, of a cruse of oil that can never fail, yet refuses to do good and to communicate this infinite provision? And can we exonerate ourselves from this charge, my brethren, if, possessed as we are of the means of grace and the hope of glory, a treasure

¹ Litany.

which no however bounteous distribution can diminish, we look on in contented apathy whilst millions of our fellow-creatures—nay, of our fellow-countrymen—are perishing for lack of the bread of life?

I really feel it difficult to speak calmly on this subject. There are in every one of our large towns thousands upon thousands professing the same faith with ourselves, who are in a state not far removed from heathenism: knowing nothing of their God, nothing of their Saviour: never entering a place of worship. It is a melancholy fact that, in our cities at least, religion seems hardly to descend below the middle classes: between them and the lower there is a great gulf fixed. Look at the congregations which assemble in any of our churches! How small a portion of them consists of those to whom Christ specially preached the Gospel! And how can this be otherwise when there is no accommodation for them in the house of God? How can we invite the poor to come where they have no place? In one small street alone of the populous parish in which I had to labour I found as many Protestant families as would half fill this church¹! How then can we wonder that each year diminishes the numbers of those merely nominal Protestants! Nay, I had almost said, how can we even regret that they should leave a community which provides not for their instruction, that they should go over to a sect which opens its arms wide to receive them! And do we imagine that we are free of responsibility in this matter? That God will

¹ A church with more than a thousand sittings.

not ask each of us in the last day “ Where is thy brother?” *They* compass sea and land to make one proselyte—they labour unremittingly to bring men, not to God, but to saints and angels—to induce them to fix their hopes not on Christ, but on the Virgin Mary, on pictures and statues, canvass and tinsel, stocks and stones! to make them slavishly bow down before the lying pretensions of a priesthood who have impiously usurped the Mediatorial Throne! And shall we be excused in the sight of God, if, seeing all this, we sit still with folded hands, not making one effort to redeem his prey from the mighty?

We are every one of us Christ’s stewards: appointed to give some portion of his household their meat in due season. Freely we have received—freely let us give. Perhaps the chief reason why we in general derive so little benefit from God’s Word is, that we hardly ever take the active exercise of doing God’s will, which is necessary to digest it. For if we were really doing His will, do you think that error, fatal error, would be advancing as we now see it doing every day with more and more gigantic strides? Do not mistake me. I do not wish you to go out into the streets preaching, but I do wish you to understand that it is your bounden duty to bear testimony to the truth before all with whom you are in any way connected: to put your candle, not under a bed or a bushel, but on a candlestick, so that it may diffuse its light through the whole house. One word in season often does more than a sermon out of season. I wish you not to *proselytize*

but to *instruct*: to throw out, as you may easily do if you are yourselves earnest and thoughtful Christians, hints that may arrest attention and arouse reflection—to bring before your erring brethren some of those great leading decisions of God's Word which in one sentence often prostrate a mass of error: some of those quick and powerful sayings which pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and which discern the very intents of the heart. And this may be done without suspicion or offence by every one who is himself thoroughly in earnest, and who speaks out of the abundance of his heart: for heart answereth to heart. And whether your efforts be crowned with much or little apparent success, will be of small moment, compared with the feeling that you have done your duty. But in truth, what is this constant benumbing anticipation of failure which paralyzes every effort, but downright unbelief? Has not God said that His Word shall not return unto Him void? How then dare you stand aloof, reasoning with God about its efficacy? Why were such wonders accomplished in the first ages with means seemingly so inadequate, except because men believed at that time and therefore spake! Speak you the truth in love, my brethren, as Paul did, and the God who blessed Paul's words will bless yours. Above all, *act the truth by love*—make your lives utter speech day by day—let the sincere and strong convictions of your hearts be mirrored in your conduct—this will be the most persuasive, because the most truthful, unsuspicious eloquence. So will you

be fulfilling your responsibility to Christ for all your portion of His family by giving them meat in due season. “And blessed shall you be if your lord when he cometh shall find you so doing.” Your position in his eternal kingdom shall correspond to your present faithfulness. But if you make no exertion to give your fellow-men the bread of life, if you stand idle while hell is enlarging his borders without measure, what doom can you expect but that of hypocrites? Hypocrites, who never believed those awful realities they profess to believe—God—eternity—heaven—hell! and the one way to God and heaven, even Christ! For had they believed them, how could they have helped proclaiming them in the midst of a perishing world—trumpet-tongued? How could they, believing that there is but one Mediator between God and man, but one Advocate with the Father, but one sacrifice for sins, have helped pointing to Him—“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!” Hypocrites, who could insult God daily by saying, “Thy kingdom come,” without taking one step to advance his kingdom—“Thy will be done,” without ever attempting to do *His* will, whose stewards they are!

Think not, my brethren, to excuse yourselves by saying, “These are the duties of the clergy—not ours.” Public and authoritative instruction in the congregation is indeed the exclusive duty of the clergy; in the most eminent sense therefore they are Christ’s stewards, appointed to give his household their meat in due season: to feed the Church of Christ, which he hath purchased

by his own blood. But, my brethren, the parable was never meant to apply exclusively to the apostles or to Christian ministers. What our Lord said to them, He himself declares He said to all; *watch*: and if the command be addressed to all, how can we imagine that the parables which explain it are not meant to apply to all? My brethren, we cannot thus evade our direct personal responsibility. We cannot do our duty by proxy. And consider the rich spiritual benefits of which you are depriving not only others, but yourselves also, by your inactivity: you are not merely neglecting a duty, you are forfeiting a privilege—the blessed privilege of doing good. Hence the religion which ought to have gained strength by diffusing itself, has languished and died, perhaps, for want of its natural scope: the flame of love which ought to have spread and enwrapped all within its reach, aspiring heavenwards with ever mightier blaze, has well nigh sunk and expired for want of aliment. Hence the doubts, the fears, the perplexities of Christians now-a-days: hence the sickly and drooping tone of our personal faith, so different from that which presents itself in every page of the apostolic epistles, that we can hardly recognize our Christianity as being the same with that of the first believers. Hence the general absence of joy and peace in believing. Hence the perpetual craving after personal assurance of salvation. My brethren, would you have this assurance? Would you be glad to exchange your present languid and timorous frame for a hearty and vigorous confidence? Then, instead of constantly looking

inwards into your own wicked and deceitful hearts, look outwards into the world. See how much misery there is, bodily and spiritual, how much ignorance, how much error: and examine faithfully the opportunities you may have for diminishing all this misery and ignorance and error; and do not allow yourselves in the fatal course of doing nothing because you cannot accomplish everything: and if you persevere in doing all the good you can, your perplexities and fears will soon vanish, and you will obtain the most comfortable and the best grounded assurance that you are indeed Christ's because you hear and obey His voice. He has told you to watch—He has explained how you are to watch—and blessed are ye, if your Lord when He cometh shall find you so doing.

Above all, do not put off exertion. Do not say in your hearts, “My lord delayeth his coming. I shall have plenty of time at some future period when I have less business and fewer engagements.” We are told that his coming will be sudden and unlooked for. We know that what to each individual represents his coming, is mostly unlooked for though it may not be sudden. Nothing is more common—nothing is generally less expected than death. “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” In nine cases out of ten, there is the same death-bed scene, made up of vain regret that there is not a little longer time granted to prepare to meet God: of hurriedly trying to repent former negligence: and of deep-seated misgiving whether such a repentance can be accepted.

Oh, had they but known in this their day the things that make for their peace ! but now they are hid from their eyes ! For the night is now come in which no man can work—the night of fever and fierce delirium, or of prostrate weakness, in which the mind vainly endeavours to gird itself up to think—too feeble even to despair ! And so with a general feeling of neglected opportunities, of undischarged responsibilities, with a faint wish for rather than hope of mercy, the soul returns to God to give account of the deeds done in the body ! Woe be to us if the blood of those whom we have allowed to perish then cries against us to our Judge ! Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh !

NOTE.

For the principle of interpreting prophecy given in the preceding sermon, I am indebted to the fifth chapter of the first part of Hengstenberg's "Christologie des Alten Testaments." To that most valuable work, which I believe has been translated into English, I refer those of my readers who may desire to enter more fully into the subject.

I may remark, that on this principle the word "immediately," Matthew xxiv. 29, which has puzzled all English commentators, creates no difficulty: for, on this principle, it refers to the sequence of the events, not in actual time, as they shall take place, but as they passed in vision before the Saviour's mind. He sees and describes, first, a picture of the destruction of Jerusalem; and this picture immediately *dissolves* (to

repeat the analogy taken from dissolving views) into one of the destruction of the world. And as he describes *as* he sees, the immediacy of the transition of the one part of the vision into the other is transferred to the actual events.

I must also call attention to the difference (much more marked in the original than in the translation) between "all these things," *πάντα τὰῦτα*, Matt. xxiv. 34, and "that day," *τῆς ημέρας ἔκεινης*, in the 36th verse: the former referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, the latter, by the emphatically demonstrative pronoun *ἔκεινης*, being removed from the *πάντα τὰῦτα* to the other thing spoken of—the end of the world. Thus the two verses refer respectively to the two parts of the disciples' questions. 1. When shall *these things* be, viz. the destruction of the temple? 2, and what shall be the sign of *thy coming and of the end of the world?* This at once removes the difficulty which, if both these verses refer to the *same event*, is perfectly insuperable; the difficulty, viz. How could our Lord say that this generation should not pass away before the final advent of the Son of Man to judge the world? So long as "all these things" is understood as comprising the end of the world, there is really no possible answer to this question.

The force of the emphatic demonstrative *ἔκεινη* in v. 36 might in some measure be given by strongly emphasising the pronoun "that" in the translation. "But concerning THAT day and hour knoweth no man," &c., by which the pronoun would be differenced from the unemphatic "these" in the 34th verse.

I cannot but think it of the very last importance that this principle of interpreting prophecy should be better known in this country, and more carefully examined than it has been. It is the only one, as I said before, which makes the prophecy in Matt. xxiv. at all intelligible, as far as I can see: and when we consider the great importance of this prophecy, and the hold it has given to infidels (on the common system of interpreting it) for accusing our Saviour of having predicted what the event has not confirmed, I do not think I can too strongly recommend it to the dispassionate consideration of my readers.

SERMON X.

EATING AND DRINKING DAMNATION.

1 COR. xi. 29.

"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

PERHAPS there is no portion of Holy Writ more practically useful than the first Epistle to the Corinthians. More practically useful—not in the false sense in which many oppose the practical to the doctrinal, as if those parts of Scripture which teach doctrines were not practical,—than which few notions are more mischievously erroneous: but practically useful in the sense of exhibiting doctrine in practice and teaching by example. Now of example there are two chief kinds: the example of unmixed good, and the example of mixed good and evil. One, and only one, example of unmixed good we have in the history of man; the example of Him who did no evil, and in whose mouth was found no guile. Of mingled good and evil we have examples in abundance—the history of the Church as of the world affords none else—and these are variously instructive, as they afford encouragement by exhibiting good overcoming evil,

or warning in evil overcoming good. With such encouragements and warnings the history of the Corinthian Church is replete: for what more encouraging proof of the might of the Gospel could we desire than is afforded by the stubbornness of the resistance we here behold it overcoming? and what greater consolation can we require amidst those imperfections of which we must, if we are sincere, be painfully conscious, than the perhaps greater imperfections of those whose privileges, in some respects, much exceeded ours? But whilst the gross and palpable corruptions which yet lingered amongst the Corinthians evince the power of that principle which could conquer a nature so corrupt; whilst they forcibly exhibit the mighty working by which the Gospel is able even to subdue all things to itself, and at the same time shew us how unreasonable it were to despond because as yet we see not all things put under it, either in ourselves or in the Church at large: so do they, on the other hand, give us the most impressive warnings against presumption; that presumption which values the knowledge that puffeth up beyond the love that buildeth up: and never were such warnings more needed than in an age the bias of which towards knowledge at the expense of practice is confessed even by the popular religious phraseology of the day, which commends a man by saying not that he *practises*, but that he *knows* the truth.

How little, indeed, the *knowledge* involves the living *practice* of the truth may be seen in every page of the instructive letter from which my text is taken. The very

spirit of the Gospel is unity in Christ. The spirit of the Corinthians was factious division. Each one said, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. They were not ashamed to turn the names of the Apostles, nay even of the Lord Himself, into watchwords of party-strife. And if we proceed to investigate the *grounds* of these dissensions, we see flagrant proofs, not merely of frivolity, but of base ingratitude. The holy Apostle whose preaching had conferred on them that knowledge of the truth of which they were so boastful, became the butt of their ridicule on account of the defects of his manner and his person. "His letters," said they, "are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible¹." And the weak bodily presence and the contemptible speech, (as they deemed it,) of him to whom, under God, they owed their prospects of eternal happiness, sufficed to outweigh all the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. *Manner*, not *matter*, was what they cared for: much like some in our days, who look more to the gesture that ought only to accompany the sense, than to the sense which, indeed, does not always accompany the gesture. And thus Paul's language, though the very expression of the mind of the Spirit, could not satisfy their morbid cravings: and, not content with the truthful though uninspired eloquence of an Apollos, many of them resigned themselves to the superior attraction of certain false teachers who seem to have pretended being authorized by Cephas,

¹ 2 Cor. x. 10.

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i.e. Peter: and by whom they were so far led astray as to require being again solemnly instructed in the elementary truth of Christ's Resurrection¹, and warned that no man speaking by God's Spirit could call Jesus accursed². Such were the intellectual fruits of knowledge without love!

But it is only when we examine their *moral* conduct that we can fully appreciate the mischief resulting from spiritual pride. Fornication, such as amongst the Gentiles was not even named³, was permitted amongst these Christians. Quarrels abounded: and the unprincipled eagerness of litigation disgraced the Church by parading the disputes of Christian brethren before Gentile tribunals⁴. Knowing that an idol is nothing, the Corinthians scrupled not attending the revels held in idol-temples and feasting on sacrifices offered to demons and not to God⁵. Moral irregularities produced religious irreverence—their natural result. From the temples of false gods they hastened to the assembly of Christ's Church; and there profaned the very table of the Lord with conduct which, even in an idol-temple, might have been reckoned scandalous: indulging their animal appetites at the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood in excesses one shrinks from contemplating. It is in reference to this last abuse that the Apostle declares, “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”

¹ 1 Cor. xv.

² 1 Cor. xii. 3.

³ 1 Cor. v.

⁴ 1 Cor. vi.

⁵ 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

These words I intend this morning to illustrate from the connexion in which they stand: trusting, with God's blessing, that I shall be able to remove a stumbling-block which has lain in the path of many a sincere and humble Christian, preventing him from worthily receiving this Sacrament to his eternal welfare, by the fear of partaking unworthily to his eternal ruin.

We have already noticed the fact, that spiritual pride had produced *divisions* in the Corinthian Church. It was quite natural that these divisions should chiefly manifest themselves precisely there where *union* was most required. The very opposition between the true purpose of the Christian meeting and the spirit in which these Christians met, exasperated their differences. They knew not the modern device of perpetuating their dissensions by separating their worship; and as they still assembled and met together in common, they had no option but either to sink their differences for a time—which pride forbade—or to maintain them in the very face of the object for which they met. This latter course they seem accordingly to have adopted: for St Paul speaks as follows at the 17th verse of this 11th chapter: “Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not: that ye come together, not for the better, but for the worse.” And then he explains what he means by coming together for the worse: “For first of all, when ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it; for there must be also heresies (or sects) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among

you:" words which may in some measure console us for the lamentable prevalence of sectarianism amongst ourselves, since they seem to intimate that it is one of the sifting trials ordained by God to separate the chaff from the wheat. The Apostle then goes on to depict the effect which this sectarian spirit, in a body not, as yet, externally divided, must have had on the conduct of what ought to have been united prayer and praise, and on the enjoyment of the feast of love and commemoration. "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken." To understand these words fully, you must know that in the earliest ages of the Church the Lord's Supper, properly so called, was the last part of a simple repast, partaken of by all the members of the Church in common, and called an agape, or feast of love, because intended to set forth the unity and concord of the family of believers. This custom may perhaps have been derived in part from an imitation of what took place at the institution of that Sacrament: the Lord's Supper, as we are told, having been instituted partly during and partly after the Jewish Passover, of which our Lord for the last time then partook. However this may be, there is clearly a resemblance between the two: the Lord's Supper in those early times forming one whole with the preliminary love-feast. To this united banquet each person brought his own contribution of bread and wine, according to his means, and the whole

being then placed on a table, was consumed by each in common, all sharing equally in what might have been very unequally contributed; and thus signifying that, however the Providence of God and the regulations of society had established distinctions of wealth and rank, yet in Christ all were one, without distinction or respect of persons. But this beautiful observance was completely perverted and defaced by the factious spirit which ruled at Corinth: division had become so much the order of the day, that the different parties split up the common feast of union and brotherly affection into a number of separate repasts, at which, instead of the rich imparting to the poor, every one consumed the portion himself had brought, without regarding the necessities of others: and so it might often happen that whilst one was hungry another was drunken. Apart from the general sin and the mischievous effects of unrestrained indulgence of the appetite at any time or in any place, it is plain that there was an additional criminality attaching to it in the present instance, where it stood in such offensive contrast with the very purpose of the assembly, and so outraged the blessed presence of the Saviour in his own ordinance. Hence the Apostle directs his rebuke, not so much against the excess *in itself*, as against its horrible impropriety in *such* a scene and on *such* an occasion. “What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not?” Do you come to the Church as the best place for indulging your appetites without restraint, because there you can

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indulge them at the expense of your poorer brethren's feelings? "What shall I say unto you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not!"

Having thus rebuked the Corinthians for their gross misconduct in turning the Lord's table into a scene of riotous and most unfeeling self-indulgence—and how can we help being struck with the forbearing gentleness of the rebuke?—the Apostle next goes on to shew the shocking impropriety of their conduct, by stating the nature, the object, and the importance of that Sacrament which they had desecrated. Its importance he sets forth by the fact that its institution had been specially communicated to him by the Lord himself. "For *I myself*," says St Paul, with an emphasis of which our version gives no adequate idea,—"*I myself* received immediately from the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." As though he had said, "Could anything more clearly prove the importance of the Holy Communion than this fact, that the Lord did not permit me to gather the history of its institution from the lips of those by whom it was imparted to all other believers, but vouchsafed a peculiar and distinct revelation of it to me, the last of the apostles, a revelation comprising not merely the object of the rite, but the very words which Christ had used in ordaining it? "I received, and that not from the apostles, but from the Lord himself, that which I delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus, in the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is

my body which is broken for you. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This is the New Testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." And having thus given at full length the history of the institution of the Lord's Supper, as communicated to him personally by the Saviour, the Apostle proceeds to comment on it, applying it to the particular case of the Corinthians. "For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

The continual recurrence of the Holy Communion is therefore by no means a benefit merely to the individual believers who partake of it in a right spirit ; it is a standing proclamation to the whole world of the reality of Christ's death upon the cross for sin : a testimony to the fact : an historical commemorative proof of the truth of the Gospel in its most specific and essential part—that which makes it different from all other religions that ever have been taught—the atoning death of its Founder. The Sacrament of Christ's body and blood may indeed be regarded as the embodiment of that article in the Creed in which we profess "*to believe in the forgiveness of sins :*" for in the Sacrament we have the very act by which that forgiveness was made possible¹ represented before our eyes in the broken bread and poured out wine. "As oft as we do eat this bread and drink this cup, we shew the Lord's death till he come."

But whilst the Holy Communion is the testimony of

¹ Rom. iii. 24—26.

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Christ's Church to the world and to itself, of the reality of that fact on which the Church is based—whilst it sets forth Jesus Christ visibly¹ as crucified amongst us and for us,—its benefits are by no means restricted to the mere consoling exhibition of the fact of Christ's death. It is a means of grace directly in itself, in which our souls are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ verily and indeed taken and received by the believing², even as our bodies are by the bread and wine. Faith is the hand by which we take, the mouth by which we receive, that sacred Body and Blood³: it is to faith, and not to the senses, that Christ is really present in that Sacrament on which he laid so much stress. But the want of faith does not merely exclude us from those benefits of the Holy Communion which only faith can enable us to grasp. He that comes to the Lord's Table without faith, looking upon the Sacrament as a mere form or ceremony for which no preparation of the heart is needful, does not merely forfeit all the blessings it conveys to the faithful, but renders himself obnoxious to God's vengeance, for the unbelief that "discerns not the Lord's body." This, however, is no isolated feature of the Lord's Supper: it holds of every ordinance of God, whether in the world or in the Church. God's blessings, if misused, become curses. There is no single thing exempt from the operation of this law: with God there is no neutrality: we must be either with Him or against

¹ Gal. iii. 1.

² Church Catechism.

³ 28th Article of the Church.

Him in every action of our lives : everything we do must be done either in His faith, fear, and love, in which case all will work together for our good, or in a God-forgetting spirit, in which case the very seeming goodness of our acts may prove a curse to us, because it may confirm us in that forgetfulness. Thus a life of external morality based on no recognition of God as our Heavenly Father reconciled¹ to us by the death of his Son for our sins, may, and often does, prove a curse, because it tends to make men deem themselves perfect, independently of God. Outside regularity easily blinds us to inward imperfection ; the absence of grosser vice compensates itself by leading us to indulge in pride ; and thus the very conduct which, if it proceeded from the operations of God's Spirit, would tend more and more to confirm us in all goodness, really tends to confirm us more and more in the worst sins—those of the spirit. And just so it is with the Sacrament. We cannot receive it without effect. If it does not *aid*, it will *injure*: that which is food to the devout and reverent partaker becomes poison to the irreverent and careless. Accordingly the Apostle proceeds : “ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.” This passage, as you are all aware,

¹ See note A.

is quoted in the exhortation which the minister reads out at the celebration of the Sacrament, in order to deter any person who is not in a fit state from coming to the Lord's Table: and were we to take it by itself, without considering its connexion with the words that follow, we might unquestionably conceive that the Apostle declared eternal damnation to be the penalty of unworthily partaking. That most persons do so understand the words is unhappily too true; and in consequence of this mistaken view, the Sacrament instituted by Christ to keep alive in our minds a thankful remembrance of his exceeding great love in dying for us, and to strengthen and refresh us in "running the race that is set before us," has come to be regarded by numbers with a superstitious fear, which, besides robbing them of the benefits assured to them that receive it "with a true penitent heart and lively faith," dishonours God in the highest degree; representing Him, in fact, as setting a trap in the Sacrament for the souls of the unwary. Let us then consider these words more closely with reference to their context, that we may more clearly understand a point of such importance.

There are evidently two things in them which require explanation: in the first place, the nature of the sin, and in the second, the nature of the penalty.

The sin is described in the words "eating and drinking unworthily." Now, by itself this phrase would be very indefinite: but the Apostle has explained it in the same verse by adding, "not discerning (or discriminating)

the Lord's Body." "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning the Lord's Body, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." The unworthiness therefore does not consist, as many now ignorantly fancy, in a want of merit or worthiness *in themselves*: it is not as though St Paul had said, He that eateth and drinketh, being unworthy to eat and drink, not being good enough, *i.e.* to come to the Lord's Table: but his meaning is, He that eateth and drinketh *in a manner unworthy of the ordinance*, as he would eat and drink common food, making no distinction between the Lord's Supper and a common meal, (as did the Corinthians,) such an one eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. And to shew that this is his real meaning, you have not merely to go back to the account of those disorders at Corinth which elicited this warning from the Apostle, but to look a little further on, at verse 33, where St Paul again cautions them against the same disorders in these words: "Therefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat," (viz. the love-feast with its solemn conclusion, the Lord's Supper,) "tarry one for another:" do not convert this most solemn act into an opportunity of hasty and unkind self-indulgence: "and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation :" in order the better to avoid all occasion for misconduct, do not come to the assembly in such a state as will divert your thoughts from the spiritual import of the Holy Supper to the gratification of mere animal wants. These wants, indeed, must be gratified: the body must be fed,

as long as we are in this life; but the purpose of the eating and drinking in common in the Church is to gratify, not the bodily, but the spiritual wants of our nature; and the bodily is merely the type and symbol of the spiritual act. You perceive therefore, that the same sin is aimed at throughout the whole passage, from the 21st to the 34th verse, the sin of forgetting the spiritual in the bodily transaction: in consequence of which the Sacrament had come to be treated with no more respect than a common meal: and the reverence which must ensue from discerning the Lord's Body had given place to disunion and even intemperance. And though we, my brethren, should find it impossible, with our arrangements for the celebration of the Sacrament, to fall into such a gross and shocking way of displaying our want of reverence, yet it must never be forgotten by us, that the same mind which was in the guilty Corinthians, may be in us likewise; that we may equally forget the spiritual import of the solemn rite, and partake as unworthily as they in inward sentiment, though not in outward act, inasmuch as we, as well as they, may forget to discern the Lord's Body.

Having thus shewn the nature of the sin denoted by the words, "eating and drinking unworthily," I now proceed to shew the nature of the penalty denounced in the words "eating and drinking damnation."

The Greek word here translated *damnation*, is the same as that translated in the 34th verse *condemnation*; and ought in both places to have been rendered *judgment*, as

our translators have actually rendered it in the margin¹. It is a word of very extensive application. Its primary meaning is a *decision*, a *decree*, a *judicial sentence*, whether of acquittal or condemnation. In the New Testament, however, it is restricted to sentences of condemnation, but without any intimation of the punishment to be inflicted. As when we say that a man is condemned for an offence, we merely mean that he has been found guilty, without at all indicating what punishment is to be inflicted. Now this is precisely the case with the word here rendered *damnation*, in the 34th verse *condemnation*, and in both places more properly translated judgment, as in the margin. From this word therefore, alone, nothing whatever can be gathered as to the penalty incurred. It might be eternal damnation, though nothing of the kind is at all implied in it. But happily the Apostle has not left us in this uncertainty. After warning his converts against unworthily partaking because it will infallibly draw down *judgment* or *condemnation* on them, he proceeds to allude to the penalties with which they had been actually visited in consequence of being condemned. “For this cause many are weak and sickly amongst you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged: but when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” Now the word which is here translated *judge*, and which could by no possibility be otherwise translated here, is the same in the verb with that which in the noun

¹ See note B.

is translated *damnation* in the 29th verse: so that this last quoted passage not merely *authorizes* the marginal rendering of it there by the word *judgment*, but actually proves that no other rendering is even admissible. And this conclusion agrees with what the Apostle says of the penalties with which they were visited. These were different; proportioned, we may suppose, to the lesser or greater guilt of the different persons; in some sickness, in others even death; whilst yet the *judgment* or sentence condemning them all as guilty, though in different degrees, was the same in all. Thus we see clearly, beyond all possibility of mistake, if we will but examine the passage closely in its connexion, that the judgment which the Apostle here denounces on such as unworthily partake is not everlasting perdition, but weakness, or sickness, or death of the body: and it is further to be remarked, that these visitations themselves, like all which befall those that have not quite fallen away¹, are not by way of vengeance, but for fatherly correction: not for the *destruction*, but for the *salvation* of the soul. “For,” says the Apostle, “when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

The whole passage therefore, properly, because consistently translated, would read thus, as it does if we take the marginal reading of our Bibles, which is always of equal authority with that in the text, having been put there by the translators on purpose that every one should have his choice between the two: “Let a man examine

¹ See note C on Sermon V.

himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, eateth and drinketh *judgment* to himself. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep. For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged: but when we *are* judged, we *are* chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together into *judgment*."

Let me add a few words of application.

There are many here who are in the habit of absenting themselves from the Lord's Table—of leaving the assembly before His atoning death is commemorated. Now let me ask you, dear friends, in all affectionate earnestness, What are *your* reasons for thus perseveringly disobeying Christ's dying command—"Do this in remembrance of Me"? Do you think yourselves unworthy? Why do you think so? Because you are allowing yourselves in habits which you know are sinful? certainly, if you are doing this, you are indeed unworthy: unfit not merely for the Lord's supper, but for any act of worship whatsoever: unfit for prayer—for you cannot sincerely pray to be delivered from evil if you do not hate it but indulge in it: unfit for praise—for the sacrifice of fools is an abomination to the Lord: unfit for the Christian assembly—for you cannot come to it in the name of the Christ, the Holy one of God: unfit, most unfit for heaven,

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where dwells the God whose laws you have systematically disobeyed—the Saviour whose blood you have counted an unholy thing—the Spirit whose influences you have rejected! For reflect for a moment, and you will see that in absenting yourselves from the Lord's Table on the ground of habitual indulgence in sin, you are but passing on yourselves already here that sentence which, were you to die the next moment, would be pronounced upon you by the Judge—“Depart from me, *ye workers of iniquity*.” How can you withdraw from God's Table because you know that you are “workers of iniquity,” and yet expect to be admitted into God's presence hereafter? Or do you hope to repent at some future time, but *not just now*? What reason have you to expect that at any future time you will not be just as unwilling to repent as now? Do you think that you are ensuring future penitence by present obstinacy? that you are securing the future grace which is necessary to enable you to repent by resisting that grace now? that you are conciliating God's Spirit for the future by giving those words the lie in which that Spirit says, “*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation”? Beware of the sin against the Holy Ghost—the only sin which never can be pardoned, because he who has committed it has driven the Spirit from him, and never can repent!

Or do you deem yourselves unworthy because you are not *as good* as you wish to be? and are you endeavouring to work yourselves up to such a pitch of virtue and piety as may qualify you for worthily partaking? Then you

have utterly mistaken the meaning of my text. What St Paul demands is not your possessing a certain worthiness of your own, but your acknowledging Christ's worthiness: not your *own* goodness, but your recognising and desiring *Christ's* goodness. "We do not presume"—must be the language not only of your lips but of your hearts, if you would eat and drink worthily—"we do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs beneath thy table." When you would come to touch Christ, it is not from you to Him, but from Him to you, that virtue must proceed. All your labour will be in vain, so long as you go about to establish your own righteousness as a qualification for Christ's mercy. For He comes, now as then, "to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "They that are whole have no need of the Physician, but they that are sick." It is to those who, in the language of our Service, feel the burden of their sins to be intolerable, that our Saviour speaks those truly comfortable words: "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

If, therefore, there be one such here who has as yet been kept from the Lord's Table by the painful sense of his guilt, I would say to him in my Master's name, O now at least listen, if you have never listened yet, to that voice which speaks such loving words. Believe now, if you have never yet believed, that "God so loved the world that

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He gave his only begotten Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Believe now, if you have never yet believed, that "faithful saying and worthy of all men to be received, Christ Jesus came into the world to **SAVE SINNERS.**" Believe now, if you have never yet believed, that "Christ died for the **UNGODLY.**" Believe now, if you have never yet believed, that "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and **GAVE HIS SON TO BE THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.**" And then listen to that Son saying to you and to every broken and contrite heart, "This is my body which is given for you—this is my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins—**THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.**"

NOTE A.

It has of late become usual with the followers of a certain school to speak of this expression as incorrect : it being we that are reconciled to God, as they allege, and not God that is reconciled to us by the death of His Son. And in support of this they quote the words of St John, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." But a little consideration will shew that this is more plausible than correct. Scripture everywhere speaks of God as *hating sin*; and so long as sin reigns in any man, he is obviously in the same kind of state, though not to the same degree, as those who are finally shut out from God's presence on account of sin. Must they not, therefore,

excite the same kind of feeling in the Deity towards them, though not to the same degree? In fact, paradoxical as it may be, God must be considered as entertaining a two-fold feeling towards sinners who are not yet finally condemned, corresponding to the two-fold nature which is in them, so long as they have not entirely lost all traces of God's image; first, *love*, as St John declares, and second, *hate*, for God must hate sin, and therefore must hate any person in so far as he voluntarily indulges sin. The possibility of such a two-fold feeling existing in one person towards another will be evident to any one who reflects on the subject of the 6th Sermon in this volume. We are told to love our enemies, to forgive them that trespass against us, &c. And, of course, we must be ready to do good to them that hate us, &c. But whilst we do good to them in every possible way, we cannot regard them with feelings of friendship. We cannot, we *ought not*, to treat them as though they had done no wrong. Love, therefore, here supposes, nay more, *requires* the presence of another feeling—the feeling which disapproves misdeeds and those who perpetrate them. In the same way God's love to those who have any, the feeblest, spark of original goodness left, supposes, nay, *requires* in Him the feeling which condemns their misdeeds and themselves for perpetrating them. It would otherwise not be *love*, but, if I may speak thus with reverence, mere criminal complicity. And thus the death of God's Son, which makes repentance unto life and holiness *possible* to sinful man, may with perfect propriety be said to reconcile God to man, as well as man to God. In fact the two expressions suppose, each the other: for God cannot feel the same towards a sinner in his original state—dead in trespasses and sins,—and towards the same sinner when brought nigh to him by the cleansing blood of Christ.

I should not have vindicated the expression in the Sermon at such length, were I not satisfied that the view taken by those who object to it, rests on a (probably unconscious) forgetfulness that God is *just* as well as *merciful*; that He is *Holiness* as well as *Love*: and certainly tends to produce this forgetfulness in those who accept it.

NOTE B.

It is seldom remembered that the marginal readings are as much a part of the Authorized Version as the Text itself, having been put in the margin by the translators themselves, in order to give every one able to judge, and more particularly clergymen, their choice. Every clergyman is, therefore, perfectly at liberty to use the marginal rendering when reading the lessons in public, if he deem it preferable to that in the Text. And no Bible without the marginal renderings is a complete copy of the Authorized Version: and of course no such incomplete Bible ought ever to be used in the Reading Desk.

I would earnestly press it on the attention of every clergyman into whose hand this volume may come, that he ought to make use of this liberty, if he be convinced of the propriety of the marginal rendering "judgment" in 1 Cor. xi., in reading that chapter in the order of the lessons. This would in some measure counteract the enormous mischief which is continually being done by the unfortunate word "damnation" in the exhortation read when the Holy Communion is celebrated.

Another instance of a marginal rendering which is absolutely necessary to the right understanding of an important passage, is in Matt. xxv. 8.

SERMON XI.

THE EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF.

LUKE xvi. 31.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

UNBELIEF, my brethren, is of two different kinds, or perhaps I should rather say, it is of two different degrees. Men may be persuaded of the falsehood of religion, or they may not be persuaded of its truth. They may be convinced that it is *false*, or they may not be convinced that it is true. Which of these two kinds of unbelief is likely to be the most widely spread, and therefore the most dangerous, it can hardly be necessary to say: open and professed infidelity has become rather discreditable than otherwise; besides, it demands a certain amount of real or supposed investigation and research if it is not to be ridiculous. When a man takes upon him to oppose the generally received belief on any subject, he must be able to give pretty specious reasons for his opinions, or he incurs the danger of being thought a fool. And all direct consideration of this class must necessarily be excluded from discourses addressed to an assembly who by the very

fact of their assembling, profess and call themselves believers.

But whilst there are comparatively few who by an avowed and decisive unbelief are excluded from the pale of the Christian Church, and from the notice of its ministers, there are numbers who without ever avowing the fact, nay, without being themselves aware of it, do yet not thoroughly believe the truth. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God¹!” This warning, addressed to the Hebrew Christians of the Apostolic times, not merely recognizes the danger which even professing Christians are exposed to, of becoming unbelievers in the second of the two degrees I mentioned, but also describes the essence of that more subtle and more dangerous unbelief, and traces it to its source. Its essence consists in departing from the living God—its source is the evil heart: that heart which we are told is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;” that heart from which proceed murders, adulteries, thefts, fornications, blasphemies, and all the sins which disgrace and degrade man from the image of God into the image of God’s adversary. And horrible as these crimes appear to men who are happily restrained by many considerations besides those of pure religion from committing them; ready as we all of us are to say, when we hear of some flagrant enormity, “Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?” they all are traceable to the same root—the evil heart;

¹ Heb. iii. 12.

and diverge from the same stock—the departing from the living God.

Do you then ask what it is to depart from the living God? I would answer you by exhibiting a picture of this departure, drawn by our blessed Lord himself, in the parable whose concluding words I have chosen for my text.

Now in order to understand this parable aright, it is by no means unimportant to notice the occasion which called it forth. Our Lord had been illustrating the use to which those should put their earthly treasure who would secure treasure in heaven. In the parable of the unjust or unfaithful steward He had clearly taught that the proper use of all worldly goods is to make them entirely subordinate to our spiritual interests. The *way* in which this great lesson is inculcated in that parable we cannot here investigate: it would require a sermon to itself. But that this lesson is there inculcated, there can be no reasonable doubt: though the very strength with which it is inculcated has so shocked many sincere but narrow-minded Christians, as to induce them to deny the evident drift of the whole parable. These persons have been scandalized at it, as though it made heavenly bliss purchasable by earthly goods. They have imagined they saw in it the erroneous doctrine against which Paul protests so energetically, of justification by works. With a feeling of the same kind, though very different in its source, did the covetous and self-righteous Pharisees listen to our Lord. As the Christian interpreters of

whom I have been speaking were shocked at the plain sense of the parable, because they conceived that it made riches of too much, so were the Pharisees shocked at it because it seemed to make riches of too little, consequence. As some sincere Christians dislike what to them seems making heaven too easily purchasable, by the right use of earthly wealth, so did these Pharisees dislike what seemed to them making heaven too difficult of purchase, as demanding too great a sacrifice of earthly wealth. These covetous, but at the same time self-righteous persons, men who lived externally with all possible morality, who were perfect masters of all the decouums of the religious world,—mocked our Lord for running counter to their darling vice. Idolaters, though themselves not thoroughly aware of being so, they had in all its perfection that unbelief which consists in departing from the living God. Our Saviour therefore, after a few words of weighty rebuke on the presumption which claimed, and generally received, an acknowledgment of superior merit from their fellow-men, but which was an abomination in the sight of God, proceeds to shew them at once the *nature* and the *tendency* of that disposition which they cultivated. And this he does by an instance which should present to them the known and acknowledged features of their class, neither exaggerated into monstrosity nor caricatured into deformity; not an instance of enormous wickedness, of treachery or cruelty; of heaven-challenging blasphemy, or professed and open infidelity: but an instance of what the world would call

by no harsher name than free and liberal indulgence in those good things which God has unquestionably given us that we may enjoy them ; indulgence quite compatible with every outward propriety, but unhappily regulated by no right inward principle.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day : and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.” It would be difficult, I think, to describe a greater contrast in fewer words. The two extremes of earthly prosperity and earthly misery are here vividly presented. On the one side, wealth, splendour, positive and habitual enjoyment : for the words translated “fared sumptuously every day,” convey a much stronger sense ; importing not merely the sumptuousness of the rich man’s habitual fare and the splendour of his style of living, but the zest with which he entered into all these pleasures : the mirth and jollity with which he feasted. He enjoyed himself thoroughly : it was not the dull magnificence of a state banquet, which often wearies and disgusts host and guests alike, but a hearty and vigorous luxury : splendour did not overpower pleasure, but only served to enhance it to the utmost. On the other side, extreme poverty, loathsome disease, utter helplessness : he had been laid at the gate of the rich man, probably by his fellow-mendicants, as a last resort when he could no longer go about with them begging.

Now this last circumstance seems intended, not merely to bring into more forcible because more immediate contrast, the condition of the rich man and the condition of the beggar, but also to give a significant hint as to the rich man's character. Why should Lazarus have been laid down precisely at *his* gate, unless he were noted not merely for wealth, but for good nature? Are there many rich men now who would permit a loathsome ulcered beggar to lie day after day in the shelter of their porch, and to shock the refined susceptibilities which are generally understood to accompany purple and fine linen by the disgusting spectacle of his distress? Would not most persons under similar circumstances now insist on the decorum of their mansion being maintained by the immediate removal of such a wretched object? Nor is this all from which we may infer the character intended to be set before us in the parable. As the language of the narrative clearly implies that the beggar continued to live some time after he had been laid down at the rich man's gate, it is likely that he was sustained during this time in a great measure by the rich man's superfluity: and this view, probable in itself, is remarkably supported by a comparison of passages. In the parable of the prodigal son, recorded in the preceding chapter of St Luke, our Saviour reaches the climax of the spendthrift's misery, by saying, that "he desired to fill his belly with even the husks that the swine did eat, *but no man gave unto him.*" Here, on the contrary, he omits this latter clause. He says, indeed, that the beggar

"desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table :" but he does not add, "that no man gave unto him." This marked and striking difference in a description otherwise so similar cannot have been undesignated. It justifies us in assuming that the life which was for some time protracted under the rich man's porch was in some measure at least protracted by his bounty : that the same easy good nature which refused not the shelter afforded by his portal, grudged not the sustenance afforded by his waste. The character as it thus comes out, is quite consistent, and is true to the very life. An easy, hearty, good-tempered man of the world : whose opulence allows him to indulge his tastes without restraint, while at the same time he has just so much *passive* charity as to be quite willing to afford relief when relief costs him neither trouble nor expense. And doubtless whilst he was indulging within in all those sumptuosities of dress and entertainment, which are the involuntary tribute paid by wealth to industry, he might hug himself in the comfortable thought of the kindness which gave the necessary shelter and the necessary food even to such an outcast as the beggar who had been laid at his gate full of sores, and who lay there apparently many a long day, without strength to move—without strength even to drive away the dogs which used to come and lick his sores, and which, kept as they are in Eastern cities in a half-famished state, he might expect would mangle and devour his wretched body so soon as the spirit should have returned to God who gave it.

“ And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.” Here again all is contrast. Nothing is said of any care bestowed on the corpse of the beggar: our Lord’s hearers would well understand from the previous description what became of it. But his *soul* was carried by the angels into the place of rest and peace: the place where dwell the spirits of the just before they obtain their final consummation and bliss by being clothed with immortal bodies at the Resurrection. There all that have walked in the footsteps of the father of the faithful in this life are gathered together in company with their great spiritual progenitor. The phrase, Abraham’s bosom, represents the happiness of this state under the same figure which our Saviour elsewhere frequently employs, when he speaks of the kingdom of God as a great supper: of many coming from east and west, from north and south, and sitting down, or rather reclining, as the ancients did at meals, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in that kingdom. Thus, from the very extreme of earthly misery was Lazarus at once transported to the blessedness of paradise. “ The rich man also died, and was buried.” Doubtless all that splendid obsequies could do for him was done: his riches procured him troops of hired mourners who extolled his virtues and bewailed his loss; and a magnificent tomb perpetuated the memory of such an excellent, such a wealthy man. There is the keenest contrast between the ministration of angels to the beggar’s *soul*, and the ministration of his fellow-mortals and fellow-

sinners to the rich man's *body*. And such is often the contrast between things seen and things not seen—between things temporal and things eternal: for many that are first here shall be last hereafter. Did we but fully realize this truth, we should not be so prone to confound riches with happiness; nor to envy our neighbours for that temporal prosperity which, as it involves a greater responsibility, often also proves a snare, and plunges men into deeper ruin. For so it was here. Not a word is said which might justify us in supposing that the rich man had been what the world calls vicious. Nothing in the narrative impeaches the general correctness of his conduct: but he had forgotten God: he had lived only to himself: he had eaten and drunken and enjoyed himself: he had walked in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes; and had not known that for all these things God would bring him into judgment.

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” A horrible awakening this from the dream of life! To lift up his eyes after the brief night of sensual pleasure and forgetfulness of God, and find himself in that world the very existence of which he had never fairly conceived before, stripped of all the trappings of wealth, of all the enjoyments which depended on his vile body, alive to the consciousness of an existence he could

not shake off,—in torments, yet unable to die ! burning, yet never consumed ! And this the frightful result, not of what men call wickedness or vice, but of sheer thoughtlessness !—“ O consider this, ye that *forget God*, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver !”

Yet more to aggravate his misery, he sees rest and peace—*afar off*. He beholds the despised beggar that once lay at his gate full of sores, now lying in Abraham’s bosom—comforted, whilst he is tormented. And now the consciousness of having done him at least some *passive* kindness in not driving him from the shelter of his lordly porch, and not denying him the crumbs that fell from his luxurious table, emboldens him to ask some small return. With all the confidence of one who during his lifetime might have been kept from self-scrutiny and repentance by the fatal thought, “ I have Abraham to my father”—he addresses Abraham, his father *after the flesh*: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, the beggar whom I sheltered and fed in former times, that he may make some small return for my charity by dipping the tip of his finger in water and cooling my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame !

“ But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” I believe that the meaning of

this answer is often misconceived, especially by the poor : as if it implied that those who are rich will be punished hereafter for their riches, and those who are poor rewarded for their poverty : as though wealth were in itself sinful, and poverty in itself pleasing in the sight of God. And though this only needs being fairly stated to be at once perceived to be absurd, so that few would own the notion exactly as I have stated it, yet too many, I fear, harbour the not less erroneous and more dangerous thought that compensation will be awarded to them hereafter for injustice done them here : that they have been visited with temporal affliction beyond their deserts, and that eternal happiness will therefore be bestowed on them by way of reparation. But this idea is quite contrary to the whole tenor of the Bible. All the misery experienced through life is there consistently represented as only a necessary consequence of that disease which preys on the whole system of man's nature. Though sin is not imputed where there is no law, yet death, which is but the culminating point of human misery, reigned from Adam unto Moses even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression : over those, that is, who never violated a positive command of which they were as well aware as Adam was : and to whom their sin was therefore, by God's mercy, not imputed. All the train of sorrows which merge at last in death are therefore not the expiatory punishment, but only the natural consequence of sin : and therefore none may claim exemption from them but the sinless, if any such there be ; none

may fancy themselves entitled to eternal happiness on the score of having been punished to excess on earth : Salvation is not of *debt*, but *grace*. Abraham's answer may therefore be thus paraphrased : " Remember, O thou my son, after the flesh indeed, but not after the spirit ; my son in privileges but not in faithfulness, remember that thou hadst thy choice during the time granted for decision : the choice between things seen and things unseen ; between the things of earth considered as in themselves the end, and the same things considered but as means unto a higher end : and thou didst make thy choice : sensual pleasure was thy one great object, and of sensual pleasure thou hadst thy fill : and wouldest thou now shrink from the consequences ? Having received his good things at the hands of Mammon, wouldest thou now refuse his evil things ? Having enjoyed the sweets of sin, wouldest thou now decline its wages ? Lazarus too had his choice : not perhaps between poverty and wealth, but certainly between that preference for things earthly which the poorest may be actuated by : between patient unmurmuring submission to God's will, and restless unsatisfied longing after that earthly prosperity which his heavenly father had seen fit to deny him. And he made his choice far differently from thee ; he set his affections not on things below, but on things above : not on things temporal, but on things eternal : and so he has his end accordingly : his evil things are past and gone, and the good things on which he set his heart are become his everlasting

portion. Wert thou not warned? Did not the wisdom of God declare to thee, that “the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools destroy them¹? And now thy doom is irrevocable: between us and you a great gulf has been once for all for ever fixed: no passage from the world of woe to the world of bliss is granted!

And here I cannot but remark how completely the whole representation of the parable militates against the idle notion of a *purgatory*, in which souls may be purified after death from the stains of sin. Here, if ever, ought this state to have been definitely set forth: no other passage in the whole New Testament could have been more suitable to its mention and description. For the hell in which the rich man lifts up his eyes is plainly not the lake of fire and brimstone appointed for the devil and his angels, which shall receive those that are cast out of the presence of the Judge on the last day. It is simply the place of departed spirits, in which both the rich man and the beggar are detained until the Resurrection: that hell into which Christ descended after death: that hell whose gates shall never prevail against the Church by swallowing up all its members. But though not the place of final doom, it is nevertheless a place of intermediate happiness or torture: and as if to anticipate all the errors that have sprung up in the bosom of the Christian Church upon this subject, our Lord takes care to mark in the very strongest manner the character and the nature of that happiness or

¹ Proverbs i. 32.

torture. The beggar is conveyed at once into Abraham's bosom: a phrase which, as we have seen, is stamped by various other discourses of the Saviour with the meaning of unalloyed, though as yet perhaps imperfect happiness. The rich man lifts up his eyes in torments—torments not *purgatorial* but *penal*: not to *cleanse*, but to *punish*: as is evident from the whole style of Abraham's answer to his agonizing supplication for relief. For were this but a purgatory, but a state of temporary suffering for the very purpose of securing the sufferer's ultimate eternal welfare, how is it that the great gulf which separates the happy from the miserable, is said to be once for all, as the original imports, permanently fixed¹? How is it that no hope is held out to the wretch, in however distant prospect? How is it that he is told of the *justice* of his *doom*, and not of the *mercy* of his *chastisement*? How is it that not one word is said which might encourage him to bear patiently "the fiery trial," if even in the very fiercest pangs of that tormenting flame he ought to have recognised not the vengeance, but the love of God? If the end of his agonies were to be the salvation of his soul, is not Abraham, i.e. our Lord who speaks in Abraham's person, guilty of a suppression of truth the most fearful that can be well conceived in not telling him this distinctly?

But full of instruction and of warning as is that portion of the parable we have been hitherto examining, we are only now arriving at the grand lesson which it teaches. "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father,

¹ Such is the import of the tense.

that thou wouldest send him to my father's house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

In these words a difficulty immediately presents itself : a difficulty on correctly answering which depends the whole moral of the parable. How should a soul lost to virtue and to goodness, it may be asked, display such an amiable solicitude for the welfare of his surviving brothers ? There is an apparent, if not a real incongruity between his language and his state. But it will not be difficult to see a very sufficient reason for this incongruity.

That the state of mankind immediately after death is a state of unmixed happiness or of unmixed misery, is a doctrine too plainly taught in Holy Writ for us to flinch from. We must believe it, if we believe the words, not of the apostles only, but of our Lord Himself. But every description of this state we find, and none more so than that contained in this very parable, must be supposed to be more or less figurative : the things that God hath reserved to punish as well as to reward, being such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, figures and

metaphors are the only means by which they can in any way be represented to our mind. Granting then that the state after death is described in such metaphors and figures as may most forcibly impress us: may we not suppose that the sentiments and language of persons in that state are so described as most clearly to convey the lesson which such descriptions chiefly aim at teaching? It will be hardly questioned that our Lord's object in this parable is not to gratify our curiosity with regard to the place of torment and the feelings of its inhabitants, but to keep us from ever coming to that place ourselves: and to this object we are in fact bound to believe that the whole representation will be made subservient. Now, in what manner could this object be more successfully attained than by exhibiting the very frame of mind which had brought the rich man to that place? And how could this be more impressively exhibited than by making himself disclose it when actually in that place, and thus as it were judging him out of his own mouth? Accordingly, this is precisely what the Saviour does in the concluding portion of the parable. In the apparently amiable solicitude which the rich man shews for the salvation of his brothers, he discloses the very secret of his own damnation. For when he requests that Lazarus be sent from the dead to give them that more cogent warning which he deems necessary to convince them, he evidently implies that he had not been warned sufficiently himself. "O had I but had sufficient proof! had but one risen from the dead to testify to me of the awful realities of the

world to come ! But since it boots not to regret the past, let me prevail upon thy mercy, if not upon thy justice, to give the survivors of my family those conclusive evidences, those requisites to full conviction that were denied to me !” What is this, my brethren, but speaking out the *unbelief* which had swayed him all his life—that unbelief which, outwardly acquiescing in the truths of Revelation, never thoroughly embraces them in its inmost heart, nor ever therefore carries them into practice? *This*, brethren, *this* was the true cause of the rich man’s doom: this has been the cause of the doom of numbers who have carefully eschewed what they imagined were the rich man’s vices! It was not his being clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day that cast him down to hell: many have worn the sackcloth robe of true humility under all the external splendour of high station, and have fared sumptuously with innocence, because with temperance and thankfulness: it was not, as some have groundlessly supposed, his behaving with indifference or cruelty to the beggar at his gate: it was not his carrying to excess the pleasures of the table, as the translators of our Bible seem to have imagined, when in the summary of contents at the head of this chapter they called him the rich glutton: it was not these things in themselves, whether he had been guilty of them or not, that gave him over to the worm that dieth not and the fire that never shall be quenched. These things were but the symptoms of the disease that had rotted his soul within him: the outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual apostasy

from God. It was the *evil heart of unbelief*, against which the Apostle so earnestly warns professing Christians, that had proved the ruin of this Jew: the *evil heart of unbelief*; which probably never had expressed itself so consciously before, though it had swayed in secret all his actions. For not one circumstance in the narrative would lead us to suppose that he was a professed disbeliever: while the occasion on which it was delivered requires that he should have been precisely the reverse: evidently a Jew, for he appeals to Abraham as his father, he doubtless went on from birth to death in all the outward observance of every legal ordinance: and yet, though hearing Moses and the prophets read every Sabbath-day in the synagogue, and though never for one moment questioning their *authority*—for you observe that in his request to Abraham he merely questions their *sufficiency*,—though assenting therefore to every word of the Old Testament, he had never really and truly believed what is implied in the whole tenor of its revelations: that there was One who, though now he saw him not, he should see hereafter; One whom he was bound by every motive of duty, of reverence, and of gratitude, to love with all his heart and soul and strength; One with reference to whom his every action should be planned, his every thought conceived; One who, if he gave himself up to him, would be his everlasting portion, and in the splendour of whose discovered presence he should enjoy pleasures in comparison with which all earthly gratifications fade into

utter insignificance: pleasures pure and endless as He who is their perennial fount ! All this he had read and heard and knew, as far as language could make him know these things: but all these things he had never really believed. For had he believed them he never would have come to that place of torment. And is not this precisely the case with numbers amongst ourselves ? Are there not thousands upon thousands amongst ourselves who with far greater advantages than this Jew possessed, are just as far from making a right use of their advantages as was this Jew ? Are there not thousands upon thousands who are just as deaf to Christ and his Apostles as was this Jew to Moses and the prophets ? Are there not thousands upon thousands who, whether in the enjoyments of life or in its cares, whether in the purple and fine linen of the saloon or in the dust and drudgery of the office, the counting-house, or shop, contrive to be never at home to God ? who think that religion is very good in church on Sunday, but that it ought not to intrude into the business or amusements of the week ; that the command which Scripture in every shape reiterates, “ to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness—to put forth every effort that they may enter in at the strait gate—to set their heart upon things above, and not on things of earth”—was never meant to be literally and truly carried out by all : that the standard of practice set up in the Bible is far too high for the generality of men, and that God’s mercy will therefore excuse them if they never even make one effort to attain unto it ? And what is this

but *unbelief*, my brethren : unbelief, not the less ruinous because it is not confessed ? Though do we not sometimes hear it even confessed—aye, and that in language so similar to that of the rich man when in hell, that one wonders the resemblance does not appal men when they see their own ideas so fearfully anticipated ? “ If all we read in the Bible and hear in church about heaven and hell were true, surely God would never have left the subject so little urged home upon us : in matters of such vital consequence he would surely have made it impossible to doubt : how easily could not the Almighty have satisfied every mind by performing a miracle to convince each one : and if he does not choose to do this, how can he greatly blame us, much less damn us for continuing unsatisfied ? Away with such a notion : God is far too just as well as too merciful to punish with such extreme severity so slight a fault.” Is not such language common in our day ? Is it not the secret thought of many a one who would shrink from clothing it in such definite expression ? Is it not acted on by numbers without their being themselves fully aware of their acting on it ? Yet what is it but the exclamation of the rich man when in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, “ Nay, father Abraham, but if one were sent unto them from the dead, they will repent ! ” And what other answer can we give except the answer given by Abraham : “ If they hear not Moses and the prophets—if they hear not Christ and his Apostles—neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead ! ”

And, harsh and unsatisfactory as this reply of Abraham's may seem, is it not literally borne out by actual facts? Look at the very persons to whom was the primary object of this very parable—the Pharisees; the money-loving, self-righteous Pharisees. They saw, not one, but hundreds of miracles performed before their very eyes,—did they then believe? They saw the lame walk, the blind receive sight, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, nay they saw the very thing which the rich man insinuates would be quite enough to convert the most careless, the most incredulous; they saw the dead raised: did they then believe? Nor will it at all avail to say that these miracles were not really performed: for whether they were really performed or not, they were *believed* to be performed by the whole body of the Jewish nation. For hundreds of years after our Saviour's times, their reality was never questioned by the Jews. Did they then believe in him whom they believed to have wrought these wonders? No: at each fresh miracle they only demanded still some further miracle: nothing but a sign from heaven would satisfy that wicked and adulterous generation, whose incredulity proceeded not from love of truth but from love of vice: and had they obtained their presumptuous demand, the very compliance of the Saviour with what in their secret hearts they must have felt to be a dishonest obstinacy of prejudice would have diminished instead of increasing their tendency to believe. And so when our Lord himself in his own person became the very sign which the rich man in this parable demands,

when He rose from the dead by his almighty power, those who had crucified him knowing him to be innocent, still refused to be persuaded to repent; and rather than confess that they had sinned, they actually bribed the guardians of his sepulchre to tell a lie, in order to quash the evidence of that most stupendous of all miracles to his divine commission. Verily we need no further evidence to the truth of Abraham's reply than the conduct of his descendants: not theory but fact declares, that "if men hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead!"

Such virulent antipathy to the truth as that which called forth the solemn warning we have been to-day considering, is now indeed not often seen: but though not so openly displayed, perhaps because circumstances do not allow of its display, it nevertheless exists in *germ*; witness the calm tranquil indifference with which so many read their Bibles, and go to church Sunday after Sunday, and yet act with utter neglect of all the doctrines, of all the precepts taught in the Bible and enforced at church! Like the rich Jew in the parable, who believed himself indeed to be a son of Abraham, but never recognised the obligations which that high privilege imposed upon him, these Christians now believe that they are members of Christ's body, but recognise not the responsibilities which attach to that membership. They believe that Christ died that they might live—never question the fact at least—but they never come to him that He may give them life. They hear Him warning them against the lust of

the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life : and yet by these lusts they are completely ruled, and take pride in being proud. They hear Him telling them not to be conformed to this world, for that the friendship of this world is enmity to God, and yet there is nothing they so eagerly desire, as to be thoroughly “men of the world.” They hear Him warning them that for every idle word they utter they shall hereafter give account, much more for every vicious word and deed, and yet they run riot in the path of frivolity and dissipation. They hear Him declaring that he will doom to everlasting fire, not so much for sins done as for duties left undone: because they fed not the hungry, clothed not the naked, visited not the sick: and yet when do they shew that they believe the words of Him whom they weekly profess to believe will come to be their Judge? Where are the hungry whom they feed, the naked whom they clothe, the sick they visit? And while they go on from day to day and from year to year, loving the world and the things that are in the world with all their heart, and soul, and strength, enjoying themselves in the pleasures or wearing themselves out with the cares of this life, can they seriously imagine that they are “preparing to meet their God”?

O ! if there be any such here—and is it uncharitable to suppose there may be some such in this great congregation?—let me implore them to reflect, ere it be too late ! before the night cometh in which no man can work ! Life is rapidly ebbing away—the very moments in which

I am speaking are so much subtracted from its sum ! *Now* is the accepted time—*now* is the day of salvation ! Who shall say how soon that time may be no more—that day may end—and what if they should then awake to the consciousness that they are not saved—then when salvation is no longer possible ? Then too late will they recollect all the gracious offers of God's word, all its solemn warnings : then every text that speaks of sin and the Saviour,—of righteousness and of judgment, will burn itself into the despairing soul with the brand of vindictive justice : then will each reproof of conscience felt and disregarded here, each faithful admonition slighted here, become an avenging fury instinct with the horrible energy of eternal death : then will the voice of their insulted Saviour, now their inexorable Judge, pronounce on them that final and most awful doom : “ Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ! ”

These, brethren, are truths, if there be any truth in Scripture ! O let me then once more beseech you to “take heed to yourselves,” Christians although you be by name and by profession, “lest in any of you there be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God !”—that evil heart whose end this parable so fearfully depicts,—that evil heart which, refusing to listen to the still small voice of the Spirit in God's word, would be beyond the power of even miracle to change !

SERMON XII.

THE SIN OF KORAH IN THE CHURCH.

NUMBERS xvi. 10.

“Seek ye the priesthood also?”

“WHATEVER things were written aforetime were written for our learning:” and as this holds of all the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in reference to which, as you are aware, it was originally said by Paul, so does it more particularly hold of that portion of those Scriptures on which is based the rest—the Law. The Law, contained in the five books of Moses, is the ultimate foundation of all God’s subsequent revelations to our race. Accordingly we find one of the most elaborate and important writings of the New Testament almost entirely devoted to the elucidation of the Law in its bearings on the Gospel: and the care which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes to explain the various ritual of the Law, may give us some idea how important a right understanding of it is to the right understanding of the Gospel. Conversely, we might easily infer that a misapprehension of various portions of the Law would tend to obscure men’s notions of the Gospel: and experience amply

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confirms this inference : it is a remarkable fact that almost the first errors which crept into the Christian Church, and certainly those which have most extensively maintained their ground, arose from not rightly understanding the Law, first in itself, and then in its relation to that of which it is the type and forerunner. Of this double misapprehension, the history of which my text may be considered as the motto, affords a most remarkable example ; perhaps no portion of the Scriptures has been more extensively and mischievously misapplied. Let me then beg your attention whilst I endeavour to explain the sin of Korah in itself, and in its bearings upon Christianity.

Probably it may have often struck you that the Law given by God to Moses for the conduct of his ancient covenant people, offers a most extraordinary contrast in the number and minuteness of its details, and in the extreme rigour with which each detail was severally enforced, to the simplicity of Christianity, as we find it at least set forth in the New Testament. And it is easy to see how the feeling of this contrast might tend to produce, in the minds of Christians, an uneasy sense of something being wanting in the Gospel to make it, as they might imagine, more correspondent to its forerunner. But a very sufficient reason for this contrast can be assigned, which evinces at once the necessity of the complex and minute detail of the Law, and the exact correspondence with the Gospel which nothing but this very complexity and minuteness of detail enables it to exhibit. For just as in the case of some great building, the

pictures representing it give, each of them, but a most imperfect idea of the whole, so that if a complete idea of it is to be conveyed to the minds of those who have never seen the building itself, it must be made up by a number of different pictures, all representing one and the same edifice indeed, but from different points, and therefore in different aspects; so the types and figures of the Law which were, so to speak, so many pictures of the Gospel, intended to convey an idea of it to the minds of devout and attentive worshippers, had to be multiplied, in order that the full notion of it, which could not be conveyed by each when singly taken, might be conveyed by them when all combined. And as each one of these types and figures gave some one particular aspect only of future and more perfect things, it was absolutely necessary that each of them should be prescribed with the greatest accuracy, since the slightest alteration in any one of them would completely alter the lesson it was intended to convey. Hence also, it was equally necessary to enforce the accurate observance of what had been accurately prescribed: since if it were not accurately observed, its being accurately prescribed would have been useless: and no rigour in the punishment of individual transgression can be deemed excessive, which was necessary to secure those important details from licentious alteration. These preliminary considerations may prepare us for an accurate scrutiny of the precise nature of that offence whose punishment is recorded in the 16th chapter of the Book of Numbers: and if we find that this offence touched

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one of the most vital parts of the Jewish economy, a part prefiguring one of the very essentials of the Gospel, we shall be the less surprised at the tremendous severity with which it was punished, and the better prepared to expect a correspondingly tremendous future punishment of that offence which it prefigures.

The most vital part of the whole Jewish economy was the *sacrificial system*, by which the consciousness of sin was at once kept alive and pacified. Not merely was the covenant between God and his people originally ratified by the blood of a victim, not only were all the sacred vessels and holy places consecrated by the sprinkling on them of the vital fluid, but “almost all things were by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb. ix. 22.) It is unnecessary to expatiate upon this subject, or to do more than hint to a Christian congregation the perpetual allusion made by all the different varieties of sacrifice to that Lamb of God slain, in the counsels of the Eternal, from the beginning of the world, who embodied in himself all the different efficacies which they only represented. For the administration of this system it was indispensable that an order of men should be appointed in order to officiate at these perpetually recurring sacrifices; and probably with the view of securing the greatest possible regularity and exactness in the performance of these rites—a point of the utmost importance, these rites being intended visibly to set forth and teach certain momentous spiritual truths,—it pleased God to ordain that the priests on

whom it was incumbent to perform them, should consist exclusively of the members of a single family, in which the exact observance of the ritual prescribed might be an heir-loom handed down from father to son with an undeviating accuracy hardly otherwise attainable. All the male descendants of Aaron, the first high-priest, were therefore constituted priests at once, by the mere fact of their descent: they were born to the office, and had no option whether they would hold the priesthood or not when arrived at the proper years for holding it. But as the ceremonial of the law was extremely extensive, comprising not merely the actual performance of continually recurring sacrifices, but an immense number of details requisite to the carrying out that whole system of symbolic worship,—as for instance, the taking down and putting up the tabernacle in the wilderness, the keeping of the vast edifice of the temple subsequently clean and orderly, and all the proceedings which necessarily preceded and followed the mere act of slaying the victim and offering itself and its blood upon the altar,—it was absolutely necessary that the priests, who were originally only five in number, and who were soon still further reduced by the misconduct and death of two of them¹, should have a numerous body of assistants. Accordingly, God selected the whole tribe from which the family of Aaron sprung, to be the servants and ministers of that family in holy things: the whole tribe of Levi was solemnly set apart, though with a lower ceremonial, to

¹ Nadab and Abihu.

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be the attendants of the sanctuary. I have called your attention to the order in which these appointments were severally made, because to a due understanding of the relation between the priests and the Levites, it is essential to observe the order of their appointment, and to note the terms employed in making each appointment. Already, in the 28th chapter of the book of Exodus, we find the institution of the priesthood and the induction of Aaron's family into that office, whilst of the service of the Levites we have nothing but an apparently anticipatory hint till we come to the book of Numbers : where at the end of the first chapter it is stated why the Levites are not numbered with the other tribes, as not being destined to share the land with them ; whilst in the third chapter of the same book, at the sixth and following verses, we first find their solemn dedication to their office ; the Lord there commanding Moses "to bring the tribe of Levi near and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge and the charge of the whole congregation to do the service of the tabernacle. *And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons ; they are wholly given unto him.*" And following out the spirit of this command, in the eighth chapter of this same book, in which the manner of consecrating the Levites is prescribed, at the nineteenth verse God says, "*I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons* from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel, in the tabernacle of the

congregation." These passages evince that the priesthood was not only first in dignity, but first in order of institution: and that the body of the Levites was only subsequently appointed for the purpose of performing those more menial functions which the priests could not perform, by reason of their deficient numbers, even had the performance of them been consistent with their dignity. So that the Levites were not merely inferior to the priests in rank and consequence, but were really and truly their servants, bound to wait upon their orders and to act on their directions, and having no independent ministry of their own at all.

The known corruption of the human heart might almost have authorized us to expect that this selection of one particular family for an hereditary office of such exalted dignity, and this subsequent appointment of the whole tribe to which that family belonged to be the servants of that family, would create jealousy in the bosoms of those who found their brethren thus "preferred before themselves." Having been originally on terms of perfect equality with the house of Aaron, the Levites would be naturally disposed rather to look to the degradation they were subjected to in respect of that house, than to the exaltation they had received as compared with the whole body of the people: they would be less inclined to rejoice in being selected for the service of the sanctuary, than to be indignant at being subjected to the orders of Aaron and his sons in the performance of that service. Accordingly we find, as it

is recorded in that chapter of the book of Numbers from which my text is taken, that Korah, one of the heads of the Kohathites, the chief branch of the tribe of Levi, joined himself with some disaffected princes of the tribe of Reuben, Dathan, Abiram, and On, and “rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown ; and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them : Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, and the Lord is among them ; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord ?” Of the true meaning and real motive of this charge preferred against the lawgiver and his brother we are left in not the smallest doubt : the answer of Moses sufficiently indicates that, whilst it seemed to arise from a wish to assert the privileges of the people at large against what they represented as being the assumption of exclusive holiness on the part of Aaron and his family, it did in reality arise from the jealousy of the Levites against that family, on account of its being advanced to a higher honour than themselves. For after indicating the manner in which the Lord would make known his pleasure on the subject of these pretensions of Korah and his followers, Moses proceeded to say unto Korah : “ Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi : seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle

of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them ? And he hath brought thee near to him and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee ; *and seek ye the priesthood also ?* for which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord : and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him ?” These words, of which it is impossible to mistake the meaning, declare that the whole rebellion of Korah and his followers originated in nothing else than the factious jealousy entertained by these Levites of the superior prerogatives attached to the priesthood, confined as was that office to a single family. Not satisfied with the privileges and office of the Levites, they sought the priesthood also : this was the cause for which they were really and truly gathered together in rebellion against the Lord. However they might pretend to assert the cause of the people at large against the priests, they were in reality only trying to elevate the Levites to the priesthood : it was the interests of their own tribe, not of all the congregation, that they cared for. Proceeding with the narrative, we find that this view of the real object of Korah and his immediate followers is completely borne out by the circumstance that a distinction is everywhere made between two bodies of the rebels, those who acted with Korah and those who acted with Dathan and Abiram : for we find that Dathan and Abiram were not present at the seditious remonstrance offered by Korah, and at the rebuke administered to him and to his followers by Moses : the next verse going on to say that Moses sent

to call Dathan and Abiram, which would have been unnecessary had they been present; probably hoping that their minds would be more accessible to better sentiments in the immediate neighbourhood of the sanctuary which they all alike professed to venerate: but they said, “ We will not come up:” and they then proceed to state the grounds of their discontent; “ Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us out of a land that floweth with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?” wilt thou, i e. deceive their senses into the belief that thou hast fulfilled thy promises? “ We will not come up.” Here we have another ground of quarrel, not against Aaron, but against the lawgiver himself: this political, as the former was religious. As Korah and his Levites charged Moses and Aaron with arrogating to themselves and their family a superior holiness, beyond what they might justly claim in common with all the people of the Lord, and with taking to themselves the priesthood on its score, the office of highest power and dignity: so did Dathan and Abiram, the Reubenites, charge Moses with the offence of deluding the people by false pretences of divine guidance and support out of a land of abundance into a land of famine, for no other purpose than to satisfy the vile ambition of acquiring political ascendancy, and becoming a despotic prince. It is necessary carefully to discriminate between

the charges brought by the several leaders of the rebellion, because only thus can we obtain correct ideas of the objects with which they severally embarked in it. The object of Korah and his company was to tear the priesthood from the exclusive possession of Aaron and his family, and to throw it open to all the Levites: the object of Dathan and Abiram was to degrade Moses from his position as temporary ruler of the people. Korah and his Levites were actuated by jealousy of Aaron and his sons: Dathan and his Reubenites by jealousy of Moses: the former by religious, the latter by civil animosity. And it is instructive to observe how in this case that obtains which we have seen so often repeated since: how civil and religious insubordination go hand in hand, and join in unholy alliance against the Lord and his Anointed.

Having thus elucidated the double nature and purpose of the rebellion excited by the chief family of the Levites and carried on by princes of the Reubenites, it cannot be necessary for me to pursue the history with equal minuteness to its close. But I must observe that the same distinction is kept up throughout between the two sets of malcontents, who always appear separately, and are judged and punished separately. For while Dathan and Abiram, and all the rest that appertained unto Korah,—all the family of the latter, i. e. who seem to have quitted their usual place of encampment, and to have pitched their tents side by side with those of their brother rebels,—were swallowed up alive by the earth, which clave asunder

in one of those fearful convulsions, that of all physical phenomena give the most vivid idea of the absolute insecurity of present things; Korah himself, on the other hand, and the two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly whom he had seduced to join him in his sacrilegious aggression on the peculiar functions of the priesthood, were consumed by a fire that went out from the Lord as they were in the very act of usurping the priestly office by burning incense, which it pertained to the priests alone to do: and thus met their death by a punishment appropriate to their offence. It is with the crime of these last that I am more immediately concerned to-day: the crime of the Levites who, not content with the office and immunities of Levites, sought the priesthood also: and who are not without parallel in the Christian Church, since St Jude pronounces a woe on certain Christians, as having gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and *perished in the gainsaying of Korah*. What that gainsaying was in the Jewish commonwealth we have clearly seen; let us now examine what it is in the Christian Church.

And in order to see this, we must accurately determine what men, or orders of men in the Christian Church, correspond respectively to Aaron and his sons, the priests, on the one hand, and to Korah and the Levites on the other. To determine this we have the assistance of the Epistle to the Hebrews; one of whose chief purposes is to shew that our blessed Lord stands in the same relation to the Christian Church in which Aaron stood to the

Jewish : "not having taken this honour to himself, but being called of God to be an high-priest, as was Aaron :" with this essential difference however between his priesthood and that of Aaron, that as he is immortal, so he holds a priesthood which cannot be terminated by death, like that of Aaron, but is "a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek :" who being without recorded father and mother, and without recorded death, is the fit emblem of Him whose priesthood is underived from any human predecessor, unchangeable and everlasting. And as the sacrifices offered by Aaron and his sons the priests under the Law were nothing but imperfect representations of what had existed from the foundation of the world in the counsels of the Deity, and possessed no intrinsic efficacy of their own ; so, as soon as that great sacrifice of which they were but emblems was actually accomplished on Mount Calvary, and the priest who offered up that sacrifice was fully revealed to mankind in this his priestly and sacrificial character, it became unnecessary to maintain the temporary and imperfect representation of that priest and sacrifice afforded by the Aaronic priesthood. And this leads to another specific and essential difference between the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, and the priesthood of our Lord ; as the sacrifices which the former offered had no intrinsic efficacy to atone for sin, and were in fact merely emblems of that one effectual sacrifice which, as we are told in the same epistle, Christ offered once for all, without any need, i.e. of its being repeated, so they required being

continually renewed: each fresh offence demanded a fresh sacrifice applying to itself alone. Hence the necessity not merely of a constant order, but of a numerous body of priests, constantly to be offering up the multitude of sacrifices which were demanded by the provisions of the Law. But Christ having once for all, by the one sacrifice of himself once offered,—for such is the drift of the reasoning throughout the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—Christ having by his one sacrifice of himself put away sin for ever, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified, is now gone into the presence of God, the true Holiest of all, with his own blood, there to remain pleading the merits of that blood on behalf of his faithful people, and applying it in the case of each himself until that time when He shall come forth again in all his Majesty to judge both quick and dead. His priesthood therefore is not merely perpetual, superseding the necessity of an hereditary or transmitted priesthood, such as that which Aaron transmitted to his eldest son, but it is all-sufficient, and therefore supersedes all necessity for any other priest: so that as there is but a single victim under the New Covenant, and that victim once offered, so also there can be in the nature of things but a single priest; He, that is, who hath once for all offered up that victim. In these points, then, Christ's Priesthood under the Gospel differs from that of Aaron and his sons under the Law; in that it is the priesthood of one who is indeed “without beginning of days and end of life;” the priesthood of one who is himself alone com-

petent to fulfil all the duties pertaining to the office ; the priesthood therefore, finally, of one who has neither predecessors, nor successors, nor assistants in his priesthood. It is therefore contrary to the whole tenor of this reasoning, and this reasoning is the reasoning not of man but of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to suppose that there is any parallel in the Christian Church to the Jewish priesthood, except the sole and perpetual priesthood of our blessed Lord. As in Himself He unites the virtues which all the different Jewish sacrifices did but shadow forth, so is He in His own person the only Priest, as well as the only victim, of the New Covenant.

After having thus settled on divine authority the Christian representative and antitype of the Jewish high-priest and his descendants, it is not difficult to determine what order of men in the Christian Church answer to the Levites. Recollecting that the Levites were of subsequent institution to the priests among the Jews, and that they were appointed mainly to act as the servants of the priests, we find in both respects a most striking correspondence between them and the Christian ministry. Introduced subsequently to the institution of our great High-Priest, and introduced as he himself continually declares, to act as his servants under his directions and by his commission, the parallel between them and the Levites is exact in its chief points. Of the Christian ministry being subsequent in its appointment to the Priesthood of our blessed Lord, no reader of the Gospels

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can for a moment doubt; since we know that Christ was formally inducted into all his offices at the very moment of his public entrance on his ministry, though as yet not all these offices were fully called into public action. He was Priest and King, as well as Prophet, from the very day on which the Holy Ghost descended on him as He rose from the baptismal flood, "anointing him with the oil of gladness above his fellows," and on which the voice from the excellent glory proclaimed to the assembled multitude, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is impossible to mistake the allusion made in this proclamation to the prophetic words of the second Psalm,—"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;" and when we recollect that these words of the Psalmist are quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in connexion with the institution of our Saviour to the priesthood, we see that his priesthood in its actual existence, and not merely by anticipation, dates from his entrance on his public ministry. His priestly and his kingly functions existed equally with his prophetical functions from that very day, although the first was not fully manifested till he offered himself upon the Cross, and though the second will not be fully manifested till He return again in glory to judge the world, and to rule over the regenerated universe. This being premised, we see at once that the appointment of the Apostles and subsequent Christian ministers, stands in the same relation of time to the appointment of Christ, in which the appointment of the Levites stood to the appointment of

Aaron and his sons. As the Levites were chosen and inducted into their office after Aaron was into his, so were the Apostles chosen and inducted into their office after Christ was into His. But not merely in order of appointment does the parallel hold good: it holds good also with regard to rank and dignity and office. As the Levites were inferior in rank and dignity and office to Aaron and his sons, the priests, so is the Christian ministry inferior in rank and dignity and office to Christ, our great and only Priest. This indeed, the good feeling of Christendom at large would hardly be disposed to question, one would think: and yet, there is a Christian Church which speaks of her highest minister as the vicar or substitute of Christ on earth, implying that for the present he is to be regarded with as much deference and respect as though he were the Son of God himself, whose person he is supposed to represent, and whose office he is supposed to minister. Nor am I digressing from the strict treatment of the subject now before me in thus noticing the pretensions of the Roman Pontiff: for these pretensions, which excite in our minds horror and disgust, are but the natural fruits of overlooking the fact that all Christian ministers under the New Dispensation stand in the same position with regard to Christ, in which the Levites under the Old stood with regard to Aaron and his sons. Nothing, indeed, could more accurately explain the relation between Christ and his ministers, than the relation between the Jewish priests and their ministers the Levites; and the very language of

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the New Testament upon this subject seems often borrowed from the Old. For as the Levites were given—to use the words of the Lord to Moses—given to Aaron and his sons to be their servants or their slaves, to assist them in every lesser function of their office than the act of sacrificing ; so do the Apostles in the New Testament continually speak of themselves as the servants, or more properly the slaves, of Christ, acting by his orders and under his directions, and supplying his place in every lesser function of his office than the priestly. For, as St Paul declares, “ He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ;” but *none*, you observe, *priests*. This is the function which Christ in the very nature of things reserves to himself alone : the capacity in which He hath once for all offered the one all-sufficing sacrifice, and in which He now ever liveth making intercession for us ; and Christian ministers have no more right to arrogate to themselves the functions of the Christian priesthood, than Korah and his Levites had to arrogate to themselves the functions of the Jewish priesthood. Here, then, the crime in the Christian Church corresponding to that which Korah and his followers committed in the Jewish Church, flashes at once upon our minds : we see that it consists, not as is often stated, in the people taking to themselves the functions of the ministry, but in the Christian ministry impiously usurping the functions of Christ himself ; and, not contented with their Master’s having

separated them from the congregation of his people to bring them near unto himself, to do the service of his house and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, *in their “seeking the Priesthood also.”* This is the gainsaying of Korah, which the authority of inspiration declares should be repeated, even in the earliest ages of the Christian Church; and which is significantly coupled by St Jude with the way of Cain, and with the running greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. And do we not find, my brethren, that wherever the sin of Korah is repeated,—and on how large a scale it is repeated in the Church of Rome who does not know!—that there ensues the persecution and even the murder of those brethren who have a purer faith, and by that faith offer up a more acceptable sacrifice to God than that presented by these Christian Levites, who, intruding into the priestly office, pretend to offer up sacrifice for the quick and dead; careless, that by thus “seeking the priesthood also,” they are virtually stigmatizing Christ’s once for all performed and all-sufficient sacrifice as not enough? Do we not find that wherever the sin of Korah is repeated, its perpetrators run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, not being satisfied with the decent maintenance which Scripture entitles Christian ministers to claim, but making a traffic of their spiritual functions as did Balaam; and whilst pretending, like Balaam, the most scrupulous deference to the commands of God, yet exceeding even Balaam in wickedness, inasmuch as they invent doctrines nowhere contained in God’s revealed

will, for the purpose of turning them into money, and making godliness into gain? And are we to suppose that the far-reaching glance of inspiration coupled these things together by accident, and that there is but an accidental connexion between the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Korah? between the spirit which persecutes and murders the brethren upon religious grounds,—for on such grounds did Cain murder his brother Abel,—the spirit which perverts religion to the purposes of filthy lucre, and last and worst of all, the spirit which, not satisfied with the legitimate functions of the Christian ministry, usurps the priesthood also?

But perhaps it will be objected that I am preaching what is at variance with the tenets of the very Church of which I am myself a Priest, in thus denouncing as the sin of Korah the claim which some Christian ministers make to the priesthood. Does not the very title of your office condemn you at least in the judgment of your own Church? I answer *No*: and I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to explain a point which I think is very generally misunderstood. The word Priest in the English tongue is derived from the Greek word Presbyter, which means an elder: and which is the only word used in the New Testament as the official title of the second order of the Christian Ministry¹. This word, Presbyter, was in rapid utterance corrupted first into *Prester*, in which transition state it occurs frequently in the Norman English of the middle ages, and from that again it was

¹ Except, indeed, the word ἐπίσκοπος.

further shortened into *Priest*. Originally, therefore, the word *priest* meant the same thing only as the word presbyter, of which it is merely an abbreviated form. But when the Scriptures were translated into English, it was found that there was no word to express the Greek word¹ which denotes a sacrificing priest, such as were Aaron and his sons under the old, and such as is Christ alone under the new covenant. Being, then, without a word to designate the Greek term for a sacrificing priest, they unfortunately allowed themselves to use for it that word which properly means only a presbyter or elder: so that the word Priest is now used in two completely different senses; the one that which is proper to it, and in which it denotes a presbyter or elder, and the other that which is not proper to it, in which it denotes a sacrificing priest. Now the Services of our Church, in using this ambiguous term to designate the second order of the Christian Ministry, nowhere speak of that order amongst ourselves in such terms as would be requisite, supposing them to be sacrificing priests, but only in such terms as are suitable supposing them to be presbyters. Consult the form prescribed for the ordering of Priests: and you will find that the Epistles and the Gospels selected for that occasion, and to which the Bishop in his exhortation to the candidates appeals, as setting forth the dignity and importance of their office, make no mention whatever of the rite of sacrifice; the Epistle indeed containing the very passage to which I before directed your attention, as

¹ *ἱερεύς.*

enumerating a number of different offices in the Christian Church, and yet making no mention of a sacrificial office : the Gospels speaking, one of them of the abundance of the harvest and of the want of labourers therein, and the other of the pastoral office of Christ the Good Shepherd, in which, according to St Paul, he hath appointed the Christian Ministry his deputies, since “he hath given some pastors.” And whereas, in the Romish Church, the very chief part of the ordination service is that in which the authority and power to offer sacrifices for the quick and dead is supposed to be conferred, the ordination service of our own Church contains not a single word which could be tortured into any, the most distant, allusion to the conferring of such power. And with this we shall find the language of the Prayer-Book everywhere agree. Where there is a sacrificing priest, there must be an altar on which he may offer sacrifice : but *the Prayer-Book recognises no altar in our churches*. Not once throughout its whole compass is the word applied to that which in vulgar parlance goes by that name : the only terms by which the Prayer-Book speaks of it are the Lord’s Table, or the Holy Table. The language of our admirable Liturgy is everywhere consistent on this subject : it knows no sacrificing Priest in the Christian Church but Christ : no altar but the Cross. But the very guardedness with which it excludes all that might seem, however slightly and evidently undesignedly, to favour the blasphemous claims which Rome, following in the steps of “the gainsaying of Korah,” has set up, the very

carefulness with which the compilers of our Liturgy and Articles provided, as they doubtless thought, effectually, against the possibility of any such assumption in the Church which they reformed, does but render more detestable the conduct of those in modern times who, in flagrant opposition not merely to the word of God, which all Christians profess to venerate, but to the very interpretation of that word supplied by the Articles and Liturgy to which they have put their own hands, renew the heretical pretensions of Rome in the bosom of our own beloved Church, and with a treachery which is only less shocking than its venality, attempt to subvert its doctrines whilst they enjoy its emoluments. Availing themselves of the unfortunate ambiguity of the word Priest, which alone gives even a shadow of reason to their pretence, and cannot impose on any one acquainted with the origin of that word, and with the Scriptures in that inspired original in which it is the bounden duty of every Christian minister to study them, these persons impose upon the ignorance or unreflectiveness of the unstable and the weak: "they lead captive silly women laden with divers sins," and men as silly, and far more culpable, because from their sex less liable to such seductions; and by high-sounding claims and a mystic phraseology, which is as different from the clearness and simplicity of the New Testament as darkness is from light, they delude them into respecting and reverencing them, not as pastors and teachers, the only light in which the New Testament recognises the ordinary Christian

ministry, but as sacrificing priests, endued with the powers which Christ alone possesses, and taking his place as intercessors for the people at the throne of grace. Bear with me if I seem to speak too strongly on this subject: it is because I am strongly convinced upon it: because I know that these pretensions are agreeable to the pride of the human heart, which is ever tempting men “to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think,” and which renders welcome any means of inducing others to entertain an exaggerated opinion of them likewise. And what more common and more deplorable than weakness trying to support itself by arrogance? And though these arrogant pretensions have been more extensively disseminated in England than here, it is by no means unlikely that they may be set up in this country also: even here there are examples of hieratical assumption: and to be forewarned against the danger is to be fore-armed. True it is, that we in this country¹ have a safeguard which those in the sister isle do not possess: we have before us the original in all its naked deformity, of which these pretensions in our Church are but a miserable copy: and we see and know what Romanism is too well to be in much danger—the great mass of us, at least,—of falling in love with its imitation; but the same causes which, operating through the course of centuries, have produced the full-blown enormities of Rome, are at work amongst ourselves: the Christian ministry are everywhere tempted to “take too much upon them;” and not content

¹ Ireland.

with being “separated from the congregation, with being brought near to the Lord to do the service of his house, and to stand before the congregation ministering unto them,” are prompted, by the domineering spirit which has perhaps been throughout all ages their besetting sin, in various ways “to seek the priesthood also.” For every assumption of power unsanctioned by the letter and the spirit of the New Testament, every attempt to “lord it over God’s heritage,” every claim to absolute and dictatorial authority over the congregation, is a manifestation of the same spirit which impelled the rebellious sons of Levi, in days of old, under pretence of doing away with the monopoly of Aaron and his family, to encroach upon their office; and which in more recent times induced almost the whole body of Christ’s ministers to repeat their offence, but in a far more guilty way, and with far more disastrous effect: since those, who in the Christian Church follow in the steps of the gainsaying of Korah, rise up, not as Korah did, against a mere temporary and typical high-priest, but against the great High-Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ himself. And, assuredly, in days in which we have seen so gigantic an attempt to reintroduce all the worst corruptions of Rome amongst ourselves, in days when a great movement backwards has convulsed our Church in the sister country,—surely in such days it cannot be—can never be—superfluous to warn you against a danger which is coextensive with the corruption of the human heart:—the danger arising from the temptations that a corrupt heart urges in a thousand

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ways upon the ministers of Christ, that not content with their proper place and station in the Church as pastors and teachers, they should endeavour to make themselves lords paramount, and for the purpose of effecting this, should "seek the priesthood also."

I must not, however, disguise from you my strong conviction that the temptation to arrogate undue authority, does not entirely arise in all cases from the natural desire of superiority; and that Christian ministers are often instigated to sin the sin of Korah, in aspiring to a higher dignity than appertains to them, by being refused by their people the consideration and support which is their due. The Christian ministry is ordained by Christ himself to hold the same place in the Church now which the Levites did of old, and they have the same title to the support and respect of their people which the Levites had. "If we are to minister to you in spiritual things,"—and how difficult and laborious that is, none can have the least idea, save those who know it by experience,— "is it a great thing that we should receive your carnal things?" Can you imagine that the minister of Christ should be able to discharge all the duties of his calling,— duties which, if at all adequately discharged, are most weighty and oppressive,—that he should give time and trouble to the meditation and laborious thought which are absolutely necessary, if he is really to feed the flock with sound instruction, and not merely to reiterate familiar commonplace; that he should be instant in season and out of season,—if his mind be weighed down with anxiety

about his pecuniary necessities? Can you expect that he shall have a mind stored with all the various learning which, in these days more than ever, is necessary to assert, explain, and defend the great doctrines of the Gospel against the innumerable subtle errors of which these times of universally diffused but superficial information are so extraordinarily fertile, unless you give him the means, without which it is impossible for him to supply himself with the bare materials of that almost universal knowledge which is now demanded of him? And rightly demanded too; for if even under the Old Covenant, in which ritual to a great extent took the place of preaching,—if even then it was said that “the priest’s lips should keep knowledge,” how much more ought not the lips of pastors and teachers, the very words denoting whose office express the peculiar demand for knowledge made by its chief function—teaching?

Nor is the question one merely of support: it is one of respect and sympathy as well. Honour should be paid to whom honour is due: and the Christian minister cannot be useful unless he is influential, nor influential unless he is respected. And here I speak not of the respect which individual worth and manliness of character is certain to enforce, and which will never be paid to the man, as such, who is destitute of these qualifications, but of respect for the office: that kind of respect which, being paid solely on grounds of Christian duty, may be at once the greatest encouragement to every right exertion, and the greatest check upon every undue assumption;

that kind of respect without which, indeed, it is impossible for any man to "make full proof of his ministry." Imagine a young man, just inducted into the awful post of ambassador for Christ, each day discovering more and more the extent of his duties, and becoming more tremblingly alive to his deficiencies, as he certainly will if he be really in earnest; such a person may very easily be either discouraged utterly as to his own capacities for effecting good, or what is worse, he may be driven into an utter disbelief of the power of the Christian ministry in general to effect any good, by a hard unsympathizing tone and feeling on the part of the people over whom he is placed as their Pastor, but who take pains to shew that they "will not have this man" set over them. And all this want of that sympathy, and respect, and support on the part of congregations which ministers may legitimately claim, are so many temptations to them to get, if possible, on some higher vantage ground than that on which their commission and the word of God have placed them, and "to seek the priesthood also:" and of their sin, great as it is, the people whose conduct hath tempted them to it are in no small degree the cause. Recollect that ministers are not men of different natures, of worse passions than yourselves: that which they do amiss, you have no right to deem alien from yourselves: had you been tempted like them, you would, on the average, have fallen like them. Examine then yourselves, brethren, as to your own conduct towards the ministers of Christ, before you sit in judgment upon their faults: and whilst you sedulously

guard against their errors, be merciful to them that err: your own welfare is deeply concerned in the efficiency of the Christian ministry: your own interests are inseparably bound up with theirs: it is for your own advantage that that ministry should be as pure, as able, as strongly supported, and as universally diffused as possible. For whatever be their errors, their faults, or their weaknesses, they will reciprocally act unfavourably on yourselves. If the head be sick, the heart will be faint. If the means appointed by Christ himself for the instruction, for the guidance, for the comfort, for the edification of His people, be not adequate to these objects, yourselves will be the sufferers. Everything, therefore, done in the spirit of love and wisdom, to strengthen the hands and increase the legitimate influence of the Christian ministry, will have a direct tendency to benefit the Church of God at large: nor must we overlook the indirect benefit it will confer upon that Church, by removing from its ministers one of the very chiefest temptations to which they are exposed: the temptation which, arising in a great measure from want of due respect on the part of the people for their legitimate and proper functions, would induce them to stretch their authority beyond its rightful bounds, and, not content with the ministry, to "seek the priesthood also."



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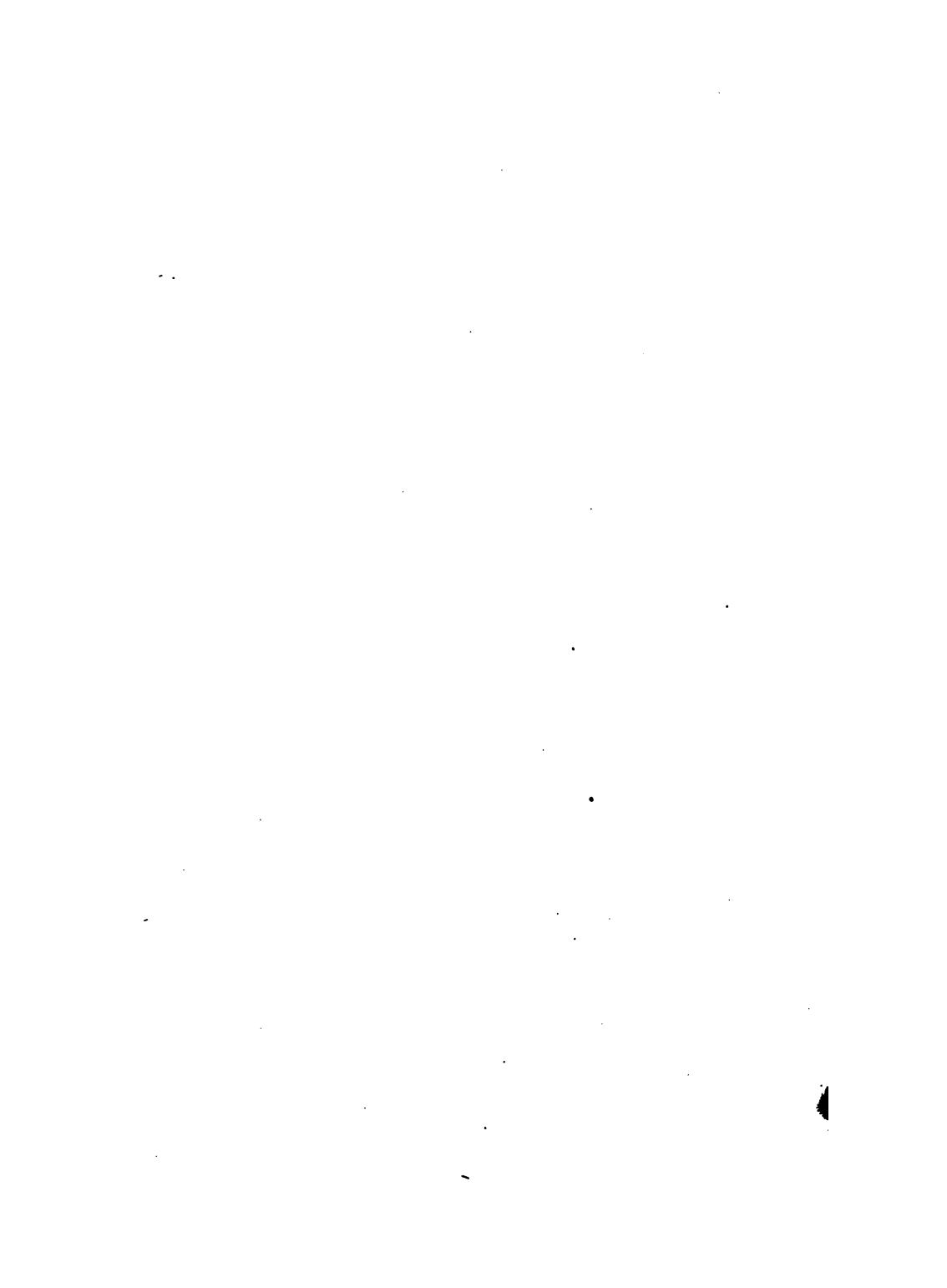
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